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Our

CATARRH CAN BE CURED!

But not by the use of the liquids, snuffs, powders, etc., usually offered the public as catarrh cures. Some of these remedies may afford temporary relief but none have ever been known to effect a permanent cure. The reason for this is that these so-called cures do not reach the seat of the disease. To cure catarrh you must reach the root of the disease and remove the original cause of the trouble. NASAL BALM is the only remedy yet discovered that will do this. *It never fails*, and in even the most aggravated cases a cure is certain if NASAL BALM is persistently used. It is a well-known fact that catarrh in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred originated from a cold in the head, which the sufferer neglected. NASAL BALM affords immediate relief when used for cold in the head. It is easy to use, requiring no douche or instrument, and is soothing, cleansing and healing. As positive evidence that catarrh can be cured by the use of NASAL BALM, we submit the following testimonials from among hundreds similar in our possession:—

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THE QUEEN'S TOKEN

BY

MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

AUTHOR OF

"GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE," "A GOLDEN SORROW," "THE BLOSSOMING OF AN
ALOE," "THE LOVER'S CREED," "A STERN CHASE,"
"THE QUESTION OF CAIN," ETC.

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St. Andrew's, Que.,—March 31, 1887.

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THE QUEEN'S TOKEN

CHAPTER I.

THE ABBEY

KILFERRAN ABBEY is situated in a wild and romantic part of the south-west of Ireland. The coast thereabouts is grand and craggy, broken into strange shapes, majestic sweeps, and sheer precipices; beyond it thunder the great ocean waves, the long, sweeping "rollers" of the Atlantic.

They who would see Kilferran Abbey must not shun rough roads and lonely paths; they must not shrink from the sense of solitude, or expect to find anything like the show places of the great English landowners. No smooth shrub-bordered carriage road at Kilferran; no deftly-adjusted plantation, bringing out the "points" of the ruin; no wide, grassy esplanade, or well-kept grassy court; no flaunting flag;

no trained ivy or luxuriant Virginia creeper hiding the gaunt grimness of decay.

The inland approach to Kilferran, from Ballycahel, the county town, is monotonous and uninteresting, like much of the inland scenery of Ireland even in the south, bears few evidences of prosperity, and has little diversity or sylvan charm.

The Abbey turns its back upon the visitor who comes to it by the land way, and its back is not imposing. When it is approached from the west by the irregular, precipitous road, winding through great gaps, from whose rocky sides ferns spring, and down whose rugged surface pure sparkling water trickles, forming tiny threads of rivulet below, and making a tinkle as of fairy music in the stillness of the summer noon, and under the solemn moonlight in the night, the old building looks grand. It stands on the face of a hill with steep scarped sides; a deep roadway is cut in the rock, on which the ironshod hoofs of horses ring as on an old Roman causeway. Groups of cattle on the plains, goats clambering about the hills, the scream of the curlew flying far in from the frequent storm, the gray-blue sky, piled with the low-lying, fantastic clouds, that veil the face of

heaven from the lands near the sea; these are the surroundings of the ancient Abbey, once a place of great fame and much resort in bygone times, when it was a monastery of the Dominican Order. From Kilferran, preachers, full of fire and eloquence, of zeal and severity, had gone abroad to preach in Ireland, and in distant lands beyond that sea, with the sound of whose distant waters the voices of the bells of Kilferran mingled. Those famous bells, masterpieces of a Flemish founder's art, were brought to the Abbey in its high and palmy days by one François de Valmont, who lived, and worked, and died, a member of the Dominican Community, and whose name in religion was Cyprian.

In those days France was a long way off from Ireland; at a distance, indeed, which, except to the great nobles, to statesmen, to soldiers, and to the Friars Preachers, implied absolute strangeness and division, such as do not now exist between our island kingdoms and any portion of the known earth. From the Abbey of Kilferran went many an earnest, eager-faced monk in the Dominican robe, and cloak, and cowl, to mingle with the motley world awhile, and preach to unwilling ears the vanity of earth, the worth of heaven, and then to return, and keep the severe

but peaceful rule of St. Dominic. But Brother Cyprian, the Frenchman, lived always within the Abbey, although a tradition lingered long among the peasantry of the place—who had little lore beside, or nutriment for the ever active Irish imagination—that no more learned man or “golden-mouthed,” had dwelt among the Friars Preachers.

The Abbey, within whose ancient walls François de Valmont found peace, and buried the story of his former life, was already ancient when he claimed its shelter. The famous bells, his munificent gift, were landed from a foreign craft, the fashion of whose sails was declared to be “outlandish.” A rumour soon gained ground that the novice had brought much wealth to the Community, in addition to his gift of the bells—these the people regarded with superstitious veneration.

If, however, Brother Cyprian had brought wealth with him into the cloister, there was no external evidence of its expenditure; the Community bought no more land, his own life was as obscure as that of any humble lay-brother there; indeed, his name was rarely heard while he lived. But for “the musical, magical bells,” he might have been forgotten as utterly as any of the fore-

gone brethren of the Order, who mouldered away in nameless sepulture in the Abbey burial-ground under the shade of the thick eastern wall. One sturdy fragment of that wall is still standing, and the irregularities of the earth indicate that ancient and forgotten graves are there. But the bells kept the memory of Brother Cyprian fresh for scores of years, even after they had been carried off from the ruined and dismantled Abbey, and hung in the belfry of a church of the reformed faith in the county town.

Deep and deadly, though suppressed, under the iron rule of the time, was the wrath of the people, when Brother Cyprian's bells, with their beautiful dedicatory legends and their orthodox baptism, were transferred to the enemy of their country and their faith. Deep, deadly, and vain; for the people were helpless. But there was something on their side — something they could not define, did not care to investigate, did not dare openly to claim and exult in, but, nevertheless, did believe in and did cherish, as an imaginative race ever cherishes an idea which combines the sentiments of religion and revenge. The men employed to hang the bells in their new place fell from the scaffolding, and were mortally hurt; the

belfry was struck by lightning and hurled to the ground ; the bells were split in the fall, and when restored, they cracked of their own accord. At length, no man, in all the parish, could be found to officiate as bell-ringer, for all knew that he who made Brother Cyprian's bells to chime in obedience to the stranger and the heretic, would have no place by any fireside, no partner in the dance, no wife from any pleasant household, no nurse in sickness ; that he would, in fact, be outcast from his fellows. The power of the strong hand availed nothing against this resolve of the incensed people. There were cruel laws enough in Ireland then ; but short of the subjection of slavery, none which could be applied to force a man to ring Cyprian's bells, and so their sonorous voices were hushed.

The tradition lasted ; dormant, indeed, for none cared to rouse it. At length, in the lapse of time, the bells disappeared, none knew exactly when, or how. The explanation might have been simple ; but mystery was preferable, and the mystery was established. But in the course of years, when infants of the days in which the avoided place of Cyprian's bells had been unaccountably left tenantless, were grown men

and women, it began to be rumoured that the bells had again been heard on the heights of Kilferran, and also from the sea, in the calm, slumbering, sparkling time of summer, and on wintry nights, when the watch would listen from shipboard for their solemn, elevating, admonitory music. Young mothers watching by their sick infants' cradles, mourners by death-beds, sorrow-stricken people heavily laden with sin and grief; above all, the dying, heard the bells. And it was held to be "a good sign" for those who heard the ancient music. The happy hearers were not afraid, although no one knew where the bells hung or if they were in existence, under any form; although centuries had passed since any sound had come from the deserted ruins of Kilferran but the swish of the bat's wing, the hooting of the owl, or the twittering of nesting birds among the ivy. They were not afraid, nor had they any doubt that the voices were those of Cyprian's bells. So that, although it was always sad, yet it was accounted blessed to have heard those bells: many a sick heart had listened for their sound until benignant fancy produced it, and so the longing was satisfied; the link of sense with the supernatural was granted.

These occurrences were, however, of late date, when ruin had so taken possession of Kilferran Abbey that one would have needed a keen imagination, and knowledge of the architecture of the period at which it had been built, to restore it to the mind's eye, as it was when the sandalled feet of Brother Cyprian trod its cloisters while he mused among the graves—so numerous even then—a man with a refined, dark, French face, eager, and yet weary, and strangely unlike the faces of his brethren. The front of the Abbey was of great extent, and it can now be traced, in all its length, although of the remainder a mere shell exists. The wide and lofty entrance is in the centre, and a portion of the stonework above the arch of the massive gateway is in good preservation. This portion consists of a long line of short, bulky columns, which once formed the external side of the principal cloister, and was probably continued on three sides of the building. Of decoration, of the artistic skill and taste with which the monks of old were wont to adorn their dwellings, the visitor will at first suppose that no trace remains. The fragments of the walls are rough fragments. The time-worn rugged surface of the columns which are still

standing, in their firm and massive sockets—formed of the dreary-looking grey stone that is so enduring — bears no impress of the sculptor's hand. But when the visitor stands close by the doorway, and carefully scans the line of stonework just above the columns, he observes a few feet of masonry, projecting towards the hollow, empty centre, and makes out how there once was in that place the massive flooring of a great gallery, probably consisting of cells or dormitories. On narrow inspection, he sees that there was also a fire-place, and in the few feet of wall remaining, the mutilated remains of a sculptured tablet may be discerned, just above the tenth column, counting from the right side of the great entrance. The relief is almost obliterated by age and exposure; the corners are chipped, green stains mar the surface, and a deep crack traverses the tablet, so that one wonders it has not long ago fallen from its position and been added to the heap of ruin around. There is no means of climbing up to the level of this sad little relic of a dead and gone artist's handiwork, and it is difficult to make out the design of the bas-relief. The visitor is told that it represents the winged lion of St. Mark, and people suppose that, in old

times, the distinctive signs of the Four Evangelists were sculptured upon the walls of Kilferran. Who was the sculptor? No one knows. Perhaps some wanderer coming from the distant sunny home of the arts to this remote place—where they were but little known, and met scant welcome—set the mark of the Christian revelation upon the yet unconsecrated walls, and went his way; perhaps the artist was a monk, learned in other lore than the learning of his brethren, and whose peaceful dust has mingled with theirs for ages. There is no other trace of any but the mason's skill at Kilferran.

A short distance down the coast, and formed by the sweep of the hills about Kilferran, is a good harbour, where many ships are no uncommon sight, and where, even in those far-away days, there was much recourse of shipping, for commercial purposes, especially for those generally known as "the Portingal trade." Many a voyager landed in that harbour, took horse and guide and set forth for Kilferran, where he would be well received and hospitably entertained, and having conferred with the monks, and, mayhap, brought them news of their foreign brethren, or more general

intelligence of the world outside, would go on his way to encounter the vicissitudes of a troublous time, casting a wistful backward look at the peaceful place he left behind. The dwellers by the shore were rude peasants, mostly fishermen, near the Abbey; the towns, with their more cultivated and crafty inhabitants, lay beyond the harbour far to the southward of Kilferran. All visitors to the Abbey had to come thither of special purpose; it did not lie in any track, and the brother porter had ample notice of an arrival, before he needed to let fall the ponderous chain from off the heavy black-oak door, and ask the pleasure of the stranger.

Seven years had elapsed since the world had lost sight of François de Valmont, and all the country around Kilferran Abbey had come to know how great were the learning, the piety, and the austerity of Brother Cyprian; but no stranger had ever asked to speak with him; no news from the external world had reached him, in particular. Great events had happened since he looked his last on his native land; some terrible scenes in the history of the world had been witnessed, and it had gone very hard, not only with the society from which he had cut

himself adrift, but with a great part of that in which he had taken refuge. Kilferran Abbey owed its safety to its remoteness—to its apparent insignificance. It is probable that many of the men in power, engaged in destroying the ancient monastic institutions of the land, did not know anything about the obscure Dominican house, or did not think it worth the trouble of exploration. Be that as it may, the turn of Kilferran had not come yet; the Community were still pursuing their way of life, and holding their goods in peace, although disquieting rumours of the dealings of Elizabeth's English deputies with the Irish people and their faith had reached the Abbey, when the first sign was given that any tie still existed between Brother Cyprian and the external world.

It was a glorious day, late in the summer; the fields were fast ripening for the harvest; the sea was slumbering in the sunny haze; all sounds had a reluctant, drowsy tone in them; the cattle lay down in content, and the motionless trees suddenly rustled at intervals as though with stealthy pleasure.

In a small room, with a grated window and bare white walls, sat Brother Cyprian, poring

over some folios of quaint writing on parchment. His dark face wore its usual eager expression, as with one lean brown forefinger he followed the lines of the writing, and his thin lips moved in unison with his decipherment. Brother Cyprian looked every inch a monk; but yet, an observer, studying him closely, without his knowledge, would have divined that with other surroundings, he might have looked every inch a statesman or a soldier. The sound of a horse's hoofs was ringing on the stony road, but it did not reach his ears, nor did the clanging of the chain, and the opening of the great door. Presently a lay-brother entered and told him there was one below who demanded to see him, and was now in audience with the Prior. Brother Cyprian looked up, with surprise and uneasiness, his finger keeping its place upon the line he had reached, and asked the lay-brother to repeat his words. Then he rose, and, paler by many shades of his olive skin, went to the vaulted parloir, where he found the Prior, in cloak and cowl, and with him a man in the prime of life, of soldierly aspect, and, despite his clumsy and stained travelling-dress, of a handsome and gallant presence. As Brother

Cyprian entered with his noiseless step, the stranger advanced to him with outstretched arms.

"François!" he exclaimed.

"Louis! My brother!"

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CHAPTER II.

THE CONFERENCE

"You never sought to learn what has been my fate since we parted, François," said Louis de Valmont to his brother, when they were alone; and as he spoke he looked closely in Brother Cyprian's face, trying to discern in it some trace of the feelings, the interests of the past. Not quite in vain. The elder man's face was not impassive, although it still bore the impress of separation. It said plainly: "Your world has ceased to be mine; but I can throw my mind back into it again, for awhile, for your sake." There was no lack of interest in the monk's slow smile, although it wanted the tenderness that exists only with association.

"You are wrong," said Brother Cyprian, in

the long unspoken language of his native land. "I have heard of you, indirectly, and know you still hold your place in the favour of the King and at the Court. More than this, I knew that you had not changed *in anything*;—there was nought else I cared to learn. If you lived to want me, I knew I should see you, or hear of you in this world, and I was right; for here you are!"

"And have you really no desire—no longing to know more than that? Do you never look back to the life you have left? François, have you utterly ceased to be the man you were? Have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten nothing," said the monk;—the gesture with which he raised his hand in emphasis was slow and deliberate; but the flush that overspread his sallow cheek was quick and involuntary. "But, between me and France—between me and Paris—between me and your life—there is nothing in common. I am not François de Valmont, Louis; I am Cyprian, the Dominican."

"I have made a long voyage," said his brother, "to see you, to confer with you; and, Churchman though I know you to be, I come to you as to a brother; not a monk."

Brother Cyprian's face changed now, and there was a soft pity in his smile, as he looked at the speaker intently.

"Think that you have come to me as both, Louis, that will be best. Tell me how you travelled hither, and why, and how it comes that you have left Paris. Surely the place has become hateful and deadly to you *too*? There is danger and difficulty, and much weariness in such a voyage; and, as I remember you, it is only to the first you would be indifferent."

"I came hither in a trading-ship from Bordeaux," replied Louis. "The good people of this savage island have one human taste at least—they love our wines. I was recommended to the captain of a trader bound to this port, and we had many storms; but I cared little, my mind being set on the business I came here to do, and on the more distant voyage that is before me."

"Still another voyage, my brother! and whither?"

"You shall hear. When I reached the harbour yonder, the captain put me in the way of procuring a horse and a guide. He knows the place and the people, and, I dare say, has done some illicit business with them in his

time—he speaks freely of their thoughts, and told me his concerning Don Philip. It is a bad road up here to your fortress from the shore, and as wild as any I have travelled; but I have rougher roads before me than this to Kilferran, and no such assured goal or good reception. I set forth, early this morning, and performed my journey in silence, for the peasant lad, who walked all this weary way beside my horse's head, is a wild creature, and speaks no language ever heard by polite ears."

"The people are native Irish, and speak their own tongue."

"Like enough; I, perforce, held mine. But rough though the road be, the country is beautiful, with all its loneliness and its wildness, so unlike our France. But I forgot—I must not say *our*; a monk has no country, and no ties."

"Not so, Louis; say rather all the world in which men live and suffer is the monk's country, and humanity his brother."

"Well, we won't dispute," said the younger man, from whose face the passing brightness had faded, and was now replaced by an expression of stern anxiety. "The world has not been

so friendly to me that I need fight its battles. I often think, François, the fate which left us fatherless and motherless—you in your childhood and I in my cradle—has pursued me ever since."

"And not *me?*" asked the elder brother, with a wistful look.

"I cannot tell—nobody can tell. The cloud of your reserve has always been impenetrable; and the world says that only one person in it, besides yourself, knows what it was that sent the brilliant, the successful, the gallant François de Valmont into the cloister."

"And that one person?" asked the monk, in a tone which, in spite of him, was anxious and eager.

"Madame Marguerite, the Queen of Navarre."

The monk smiled. "The world is as wrong as I have always found it," said he calmly. "Let it guess; we will leave it and its surmises alone, and speak of you and the business which has brought you hither. Some rumours of the Court at Paris have reached us here. One is that a marriage between one of the princes and the English Queen is planned. Has Monseigneur d'Anjou or d'Alençon sent you on a

mission of inquiry, and have you come all this way round to fulfil it?"

Brother Cyprian had seated himself on a stone bench placed against the wall, and he now assumed an attitude of intent attention. By his manner, his look, and his voice he had made his brother understand that the subject of his own past was for ever closed.

It was rather with thoughtful curiosity than with affectionate interest that Cyprian watched his brother, while the Chevalier de Valmont paced up and down the narrow parloir, speaking with vehemence seldom exhibited within those walls. "You said you knew I had not changed in *anything*. Whoever brought you that story from the outer world told you the truth. Do not look at me with such condemnation in your face."

"It is not condemnation; it is compassion."

"Ah, yes! you may well pity me. I don't come here, brother, to tell you a love story, offending your pious ears with hopes and sorrows that you cannot understand. I have come to tell you what I am going to do, so that if you never hear of me more, if I perish in the effort I am about to make, you may know that I have perished in doing my knightly duty."

"An enterprise on behalf of the Queen of Scots!" said Brother Cyprian quickly.

"Yes, an enterprise for her—for her whom fate and fortune have deserted; for her who languishes in an English prison—a palace, they say, but a prison to her most hateful and intolerable."

"For her who forsook friends when she had them, and whose fatal face has sent many a man to his ruin. Louis, I have done with all these gauds of women's follies and coqueties; but how did she treat you in old times, when you came up to the Court, a mere boy, and wore her colours and her chains? I heard something of this even then, and——"

"How did she treat me?" said Louis de Valmont excitedly; "how but as a queen treats her servants; as a woman made more royal by her beauty and her grace, than by the two crowns she wore and the third she has the right to wear, treats those whom she designs to use? What was I to her more than all the others who lived in the light of her smile? Was it her fault that she was fatal? Who has suffered as she has, because to see her was to find it easy to die for her, and to be near her, even unnoticed, was better than any other

lot on earth? You remember her, François? You remember the little Queen Marie, and how she would not suffer her page to be slighted by any one, not even her haughty uncle Guise himself? We were all very young then, not much more than children—she a girl-bride, a girl-queen. What are we now? You only know how it has been with you since that bright and glorious time; but I—I have sickened of life, of the dragging, lingering days, which, when they brought any news of the widowed Queen of France, the sad ‘white queen,’ who went away to the north land, to the savage people who tortured, and betrayed, and slandered her, brought bad, terrible news. It was hard enough to know of her marriage with the brutal Darnley, and the misery that came of it.”

“And the crime, they say,” interposed Brother Cyprian emphatically.

“But they lie! They lie, like the traitors and the cowards they are. Crime! You cannot have forgotten her; and yet you must, or you could not mention her name and crime in the same breath. Do not make me sorry that I have come to you, my brother—that I

am resolved to trust you. But no; this is only your device to turn me from a danger."

"I have not forgotten the Queen of Scots," said Brother Cyprian, and now his long thin hand hid the lower part of his face; "but I have heard from unprejudiced persons the history of her disastrous reign in her own kingdom. You cannot prove that rumour errs in declaring her a guilty woman, guilty even beyond the wickedness which we have known in high places; and though you could, what would it avail you now? You are no nearer to this woman—a wife still, remember—the wife of the savage northern earl, Darnley's murderer, than in her early days when she bound you captive by a smile and a word; and she is also a prisoner in an enemy's country, where the knowledge of your sworn service and devotion would be your ruin, and, it may be, a deadly wrong to her. What would you do, Louis? Avail yourself of your favour at the French Court, and carry diplomatic messages to those bears and wolves of the north? Do you not know that France is abhorrent to them, as the country of Mary of Guise, who forfeited their independence, and made the policy of the

Scottish kingdom subservient to the ambition of Duke Henri and Cardinal François? What weight do you carry, my brother, to counterpoise all this? What is it you would do?"

"Nothing of the sort you think," answered Louis de Valmont impatiently. "I have no acknowledged mission. I am not going to parley with the accursed traitors who have betrayed their queen—that fair young girl, so soft, so sweet, so bright, who was entrusted to them by those who must have known—or what do the resources of power mean?—how utterly unworthy they were of such a charge, of so gentle and gracious a ruler. A dove in the eagle's nest, indeed! You remind me that Marie" (his voice fell and his colour rose as he pronounced the word) "is as far from me as ever. Needless zeal, my brother. She never could be other to me than my sovereign mistress and queen, the ruler of my destiny, to dispose of it with a word. She is a wife, not knowing her husband's fate, as ignorant of her own. Men who cannot understand her frank, fearless nature, say she is heartless, and faithless, and wicked. Even if all they say were true, I do not care. My life is hers, let her do with it as she will."

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A glance of keen intelligence shot from Brother Cyprian's dark-brown eyes, and he took the concealing hand from before his mouth.

"Then *she* has summoned you! *She* has sent for you to do some dangerous, perhaps some deadly deed, in her service. Beware, Louis! I knew her before you did, and I know the school she was trained in—beware lest the guilt of blood stain your hands—innocent blood it may be, and shed in vain!"

"I have said I do not care! No matter what she commands, it shall be done, if I can do it, at any cost. I believe her to be as innocent as she is beautiful, as deeply wronged as she is fascinating; but, if I did not so believe, I would do just the same. Thus, and thus only, do I interpret knightly truth and fidelity."

Brother Cyprian extended his hand in deprecation of the other's vehemence, and answered sadly:

"Of course it is thus with you, as with all her bondsmen. There is a magic of subtleness and potency such as Nostradamus and Ruggieri never dreamed of, and this fair woman was ever a mighty witch. You are under the spell, my brother, and I cannot exorcise you. Let no

harsh words, no upbraidings, pass between you and me. Tell me simply how it is now with the Queen of Scots; what are her commands to you, and wherein I can serve her cause, or yours—I, a poor monk of St. Dominic, under obedience in this remote place—far from either of those kingdoms which banished her, and from that one wherein she has been so evil-entreated. It is with the knowledge and consent, if not by the command of the Queen of Scots that you are here, Louis, I am sure of it.”

The monk's voice was changed, and when he ceased to speak, his hand once more concealed the too expressive mouth.

“I *am* here by her command; but I have had no word of writing from her, or message by word of mouth, only a Token, a certain and faithful messenger, one which cannot be interrogated, and therefore cannot betray—one which cannot be imitated, and may therefore be implicitly trusted. It was signified to me, when the fatal news, that the Queen had put herself into the power of the bastard English tyrant, reached me, that I should hold myself in readiness to go to England, and aid her escape from her hateful durance, somehow. I was to leave France on the receipt of a Token—having

previously collected all the money which I could amass—and, taking this money with me, was to place it in safe hiding until she had been rescued, and had need of it. I have accordingly for some time past been realising all the wealth at my disposal—the greater part of it was once yours, my brother—and turning it into jewels, as the most portable form for an emergency. I have gained a reputation for eccentricity at Court: there is not a Venice merchant, not a Florentine, not a Pole—we are great friends of the Poles now—who does not know that in me he is sure of a purchaser for his costly wares. There is not a gallant at the Court, except it be Monseigneur d'Anjou,* whose dress is so be-gemmed as mine. There is, however, one jewel in my possession, which no other eyes have ever seen, since it has been mine, though it was famous enough once—it is now supposed to be lost, as in reality its fellow has long been."

"That jewel is the Queen's Token?"

"It is. When the Token reached me I knew what I had to do. Then I knew she needed me, that her position had become intolerable, that

* This Prince shortly afterwards became King of Poland, and was subsequently King of France, as Henri. III.

her unnatural kinswoman was holding her in durance, and hope was fading from her undaunted, queenly soul; that friends were few, and fearful, perhaps faithless—more than this, that she had need of *me*! Would she forgive me, if I could not quite keep down the joy that knowledge caused me? If you were not a monk, if you could judge of such things by any feelings of your own, I would ask you to say you believe Marie would forgive me, if she knew that though the Token could only reach me through trouble and perplexity of hers, the sight of it made my heart bound with a sudden sense of hope and freedom?"

"The Queen of Scots," said Brother Cyprian drily, "is likely to be merciful to any fault which proves her power over a man's feelings and his will."

"Answered like a monk," said the younger man. "No matter; I have the Token, and the first portion of my purpose is accomplished. Can you not now see that I had another motive beyond that of seeing and consulting you, for coming hither?"

"No," said Brother Cyprian. "I do not see your meaning. You must explain your further design and plan of action."

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"Willingly. The Queen of Scots is at a place called Tutbery, where she is jealously watched, and tormented by every device of a mean woman's time-serving spite, by the wife of the Earl of Shrewsbury, one of the creatures of the English Queen. This countess is jealous of her captive, and I am well advised that she is meanly entertained, even for a lady of estate, not to speak of her Grace being a Queen. King Charles and Madame Catherine* are well acquainted with the truth, and remonstrance has been made to Elizabeth, who denies that any force or violence have been used towards the Queen of Scots, and charges the helpless victim, immured in an odious prison—with conspiring against her, with sending letters to the Scots lords, requiring them to take up arms, make an inroad to her prison, and set her free. Which things, had there been any among them worthy to be called noble, any fit to wear golden spurs, and carry their liege lady's colours, these Scots lords would have done."

"And does the Queen of Scots deny this?"

"Yes; she declares that she has not written

* Charles the Ninth. The Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici.

any such letter, or represented Elizabeth's behaviour in a harsh light."

"And yet she has sent to *you* just such complaints as those, and arranged with you a plan for her release—surely not undertaken alone and without concert. Louis, do you not see that this is ruin? Do you not see that only the utter failure of her schemes within a narrower range can have driven her to the forlorn hope of your assistance?"

"It may be so, most like it is, for your cold wisdom sees clearer and farther than my impetuous faith. But so be it. I shall have in my life one hour worth ending it for, the hour in which Marie shall know that I have come over land and sea at her call, ready for any attempt, however desperate, to join the few who are still faithful to her in her fallen fortunes—for *I am not* alone in this—the hour in which she shall thank me by one look."

Brother Cyprian made no reply. He placed his elbows on the black-oak table, and hid his face in his hands. A ray of the summer sunlight shone through the painted window, striking sharply the edge of the thick, deeply cut stone wall, touching the shaven crown of the monk's bowed head, and glinting

on the burnished sword-hilt and long spurs of the stranger.

"Look how the sun comes out," said Louis de Valmont. "I am a believer in omens, and here is a good one. Many a good omen has attended me since I quitted Paris in obedience to her Token, and I have welcomed them all. Listen, François. This is our—my plan. There are negotiations for the marriage of this English Queen with Monseigneur d'Anjou; but they will come to nothing. It is a scheme of Madame Catherine's; the Duke will have none of it. When it is settled, and the envoys have talked their fill about it, he will find a pretext, and the negotiation will come to an end. Then there will be no more conciliation of England—then the inquiries already made by La Motte will be followed up; and if Marie were but safely out of the hands of her foes, her interests would be espoused by France. It is natural that they should be; for she has bequeathed all her rights and claims to the house of Valois."

The young man spoke as ardently, as entreatingly, as though he were pleading the Queen's cause, the cause on which he had set his life, before one with power to judge it. Hope, enthusiasm, courage, lighted up his

handsome face, which resembled that of his brother in form, but not in colouring or expression. The younger man's hair and beard, trimmed after the fashion of the time, were of a golden-brown hue, and his large, restless eyes were lighter than the brown orbs of the monk, in which time and habit had dimmed the light, but increased the depth.

"Say that you think we *must* succeed, François," he continued pleadingly. "Tell me that this righteous cause must be favoured of God and blessed by the Church—that it must prosper. Tell me that, brother, and also that I shall have your own blessing on my enterprise. A ship will be in readiness to take the Queen on board, when we can get her to the coast. I am not afraid of doing that. You can remember the Queen-Dauphiness in the hunting-field, François, long before I had ever seen her. You remember how she rode ever foremost, and fearlessly. The fame of her horsemanship is almost as widespread in France as the fame of her beauty; and she has had sore need of all her skill, strength, and endurance since then. Heard you here of her famous ride to Carbery?"

"We have heard, among other things, that

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after her escape from Lochleven, the Queen out-rode her pursuers, and avoided that imprisonment at the hands of her subjects which she afterwards courted at those of her kinswoman and enemy. But the Queen of Scots had ever dangerous advisers near her, and a ready ear for their counsel."

"You are hard and cold of speech concerning her. Surely her great sorrows might claim more sympathy, and somewhat soften your keen appreciation of her faults, if faults you believe her to have."

"I do not only believe, I know her to have fatal faults," said Brother Cyprian; "but I am not thinking of them now, or indeed much of her sorrows, but of you, and of this task which you have undertaken for a fated cause. Ay, Louis, a fated cause—Mary Stuart is fatal to all who love and serve her. There is no truth in her, there is no stability in her. When she was a girl, almost a child, she ever won by a *ruse*. She never valued loyalty or love; she lived but to betray. And so, I say, her cause is doomed, is fatal. Stay! let me go on. I have little more to say, and I say it with conviction,—not in useless warning—not to rouse your anger, but to quiet my own conscience when

this effort, too, shall have failed, and you are who has sacrificed to the attempt, foredoomed from the and who first."

"You will not aid me—you will not accept my trust? Are you so utterly dead, then, Cyprian François? Is all feeling so completely buried to see t under your monk's frock in this cold cloister?" the Que

"Not so, not so. I will aid you—I will accept your trust. And I will say no more of warning. Are you sanguine of success? When worse a you shall have freed the prisoner by stratagem, hostage and brought her to the coast, when you shall "D Valois, have embarked her in the ship and set sail, compan but late forced to trust something to the fidelity of a Queen is to receive her, and to defy Elizabeth's demand him an the har likewise ships." "I of France, to encounter the hatred of Madame Brothe Catherine and the supineness of King Charles?" advan

"No, no; neither of these things is in her delive mind or in mine, or in the mind of any of my Louis. colleagues. You leave Don Philip out of your of th calculations, brother—Don Philip, whose only ever." indomitable enemy is Elizabeth—Don Philip,

and you are who has the chivalrous instincts of a Spaniard, and who hates England, and the English, and their Queen."

"I had forgotten Don Philip," said Brother Cyprian; "but for me to remember him, is only to see that you would be mad to attempt to land the Queen of Scots in Spain, trusting to Philip's generosity. She would but find herself in a worse and more hopeless prison, the ill-treated hostage at once of France and England."

"Don Philip's young wife, Elizabeth de Valois, Marie's sister-in-law, her friend, her companion in childhood, her bride-maiden, is but lately dead. He will be well disposed to the Queen for *her* sake. And the bitterness between him and Elizabeth is great, because of Alva, and the harrying of the English in the Low Countries, likewise on account of the seizure of the Spanish ships."

"Don Philip will not aid your cause," said Brother Cyprian. "He will turn all to his own advantage, and make peace with Elizabeth by delivering up her rival. Pause and consider, Louis. One precipitate deed now, and the case of the Queen of Scots is made worse than ever."

"I cannot pause, I cannot consider. She is

wearing out her life, her beauty is fading, her heart is breaking, in the degrading bondage of her prison. She would change this for any lot—for that of a peasant who is free. Let her but escape, and all will be well."

Brother Cyprian shook his head sadly.

"I do not put faith in that," he said. "I do not believe the Queen of Scots would relish any liberty that was not restoration. You may free her, but not for flight alone, not for the peaceful hiding of the head which has worn two crowns. She will go from her prison to her throne, or to her grave."

"Then I will stand by the side of the one, or die by the side of the other. The determination of our plan in all its details is not in my hands; but you must help me in so much of it as this. The treasure I have amassed is not to be expended for the escape—that is otherwise provided for. This treasure is to form her resource afterwards, to be carefully concealed, so that none shall know of its existence save the Queen and myself. When she needs it I will come for it, if I am alive; if not, you——"

Brother Cyprian started, and exclaimed, "I!"

"Yes, you—for you will undertake the trust,

s fading, her I know—you will receive the Token from the
g bondage of Queen, by which you will know that she needs
s for any lot the jewels and the gold, and that its bearer is a
Let her but a trusty servant of her Grace. You will never
sadly. impart the secret, or relinquish the treasure, on
said. "I do any other guarantee. François, I have come
d relish any across the sea to ask this of you; it is the first
ou may free recognition of our brotherhood for many years,
the peaceful perchance it may be the last."

two crowns. Brother Cyprian sighed. He had no hope in
throne, or this enterprise, and his heart was heavy with
presentiment.

the one, or "I will accept the trust," he said, "but not
termination alone; that our rule would not suffer me to do.
my hands; I must have the Prior's permission to receive
it as this. the treasure, and he must be aware of its dis-
e expended position. You have nothing to fear from him;
vided for. he is a good man, and full of sympathy for all
afterwards, who are oppressed and suffering, though he
none shall does not know much of the great affairs of
nd myself. nations. You may have noted his kindly
t, if I am manner and gentle voice, while he spoke with
you."

exclaimed, "I did. There can be no risk in putting
the trust, trust in him, I think; but what if he will not
permit you to guard the treasure here? There
is no other resource."

"Do not fear, I shall have no difficulty. And now, where is this treasure?"

"Not yet disembarked. I did not know how I might speed in coming hither. Nay, more, I did not know whether you, my brother, were still alive, or whether they would bring me to a grave-side, and tell me you were resting beneath. I must return to the harbour, and to-morrow bring hither the mail that contains the jewels and the gold. I will not linger now, 'tis a long ride and a rough one, and it will be dark before I reach the shore. The Prior told me I should find refreshment for my horse, my guide, and myself here; they have been fed, doubtless, and I will but break bread and drink a cup of wine before I go."

"So be it. While you are taking this refreshment I will see the Prior, and disclose your errand, in so far as I am bound to tell it. But, first, what is the Queen's Token?"

Louis de Valmont unclasped his short riding-cloak at the throat, and put his hand into the breast of his leathern coat. "There is but one such jewel in existence," he said, "and you must have seen it, for you were present at the marriage of the Queen of Scots with the Dauphin."

Brother Cyprian made a silent sign of assent.

"The bridegroom and the bride each wore a white satin shoulder-knot, with a jewel in the middle. Each jewel was a balas-ruby, blood red and heart-shaped, whereon lay a pearl to signify a tear. The cunning workmanship is well-nigh as priceless as the gems, no more than these two having ever been made. The Queen-Dauphiness prized the ruby heart, they said, more than any jewel in her possession, more highly than even the famous black pearls, like grapes of Muscadel, which have been sold to the English Queen for a third of their price, whereat Madame Catherine is incensed, deeming, that when opportunity to rob her daughter-in-law arose, she should have had the preference. But there was a fate over this jewel; indeed, they say none ever possess a ruby of size but there is a violent death at the end of their days. The Queen-Dauphiness lost it, she could not tell when or how; nor was more ever known than that she wore it at the jousting in which King Henry received his death-wound at the hand of Gabriel de Montgommery. Much search was made for it in vain; and people said it had fulfilled its evil reputation, and was accursed.

The ruby heart was never heard of more, and when King Francis's illness commenced he had a fear of the low jewel, and would have it taken from the collar in which it was set, and laid by. Then the Queen, who was always daring, and mocked at such superstitious fables, even though she did not quite disbelieve them, begged the ruby heart at his hands, and he, being near his end, and not caring to contest anything with her, gave her the gem. When she deigned to cause it to be signified to me that she relied on me for help in her evil fortune, the Queen sent me that Token; it is one that could not be mistaken or counterfeited, it could come from none but her. There is no other jewel like it in the world."

While Louis was speaking his hidden hand had loosened from his neck a short chain of strong, finely-wrought steel links; from this a small steel purse was suspended, containing an object about the size of a walnut, rolled up tightly in a piece of fine leather. With the last words Louis placed the chain in his brother's hand.

Brother Cyprian proceeded to open the purse, Louis looking at him with a half smile.

"I cannot find the spring," he said.

"No, the trick is cunning, and you must learn it, for if the Token comes to you it will come in that purse as it is now. The third link to the right slides, so, and the purse falls open." Then Louis unrolled the leather covering, and Brother Cyprian saw the famous gem. It was a quaint and beautiful object, and the monk looked at it intently, but in utter silence. It was a fair balas-ruby, heart-shaped, clear, smooth, and red like blood; laid on it, with a well-feigned carelessness, was one softly-white pearl.

"You will know that Token, brother, when it reaches you."

"I shall know it," said the monk.

An hour later, Louis de Valmont had left Kilferran, and was winding his way over the stony and difficult track to the shore, accompanied by his wild-looking guide.

Solemnly rose the voices of the monks of Kilferran, as they chanted their evening office, when the sun had gone down behind the rugged hills, and the ocean waters were tossing grey and murky under the dull sky. None could have discerned in Brother Cyprian's face, or in any tone of his voice, that the day just departed had differed from any other day of his

even, uneventful life. His keen brown face feigned
looked out from under his cowl, composed and pearl.
devotional, his voice rose solemnly melodious with He
the voices of his brethren. When the others quietly
left the chapel he lingered still, kneeling in Louis
his stall. After some time had elapsed, and
when the stillness and solitude around were
complete, he arose, and approached a recess
on the left of the altar where the dim light
of an antique lamp glimmered.

Upon the rudely-coloured wall of this recess
hung several reliquaries, some of precious,
others of base metals, and of various forms ;
for Kilferran was a noted shrine for the resort
of suppliants in temporal and spiritual distress.
Many an *ex voto* was placed there as testimony
to the granting of petitions from dwellers near,
and pilgrims from afar.

Brother Cyprian took down from the wall
one of the least conspicuous of these objects ;
it had the ordinary form of a heart, and was of
no richer material than wrought iron, and hold-
ing it so as to catch the feeble light from the
lamp, he opened it, and looked fixedly upon
its interior. The iron heart contained a fair
balas-ruby, heart-shaped, clear, smooth, and
red like blood ; laid on it, with a well-

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He replaced the reliquary, and moved quietly away, murmuring : " First me, and now Louis ! God forgive you, Marie ! "

CHAPTER III.

THE TOKEN

THE sky was red on the morning of the day when Louis de Valmont set sail from the southern harbour, after a grave leave-taking with his brother. From the cloister of the old Abbey, Brother Cyprian looked out on the face of the heavens, musing on the strange event which had befallen him, and full of presentiment that evil would come of his brother's enterprise. And, as he gazed, the face of the heavens darkened, and the roseate clouds seemed to him to be driven across it with a fierce, sweeping motion, as though a terrible storm-spirit were in pursuit of them. Even in those remote times the phrase which presaged ill to the mariner from the redness of the morning, was a proverb among the people who dwelt by

the dangerous coast, and were learned in the symptoms of weather.

"Tempest is coming," said the monk. "It may be but a sudden and brief summer squall; but it is coming. And a fiercer tempest is beyond, also a sure shipwreck. Ave Maris Stella ! ora pro nobis !"

Some hours later, from the topmost windows of the Abbey, a sail was visible, on the extreme verge of the horizon, and Brother Cyprian gazed upon it with resigned sadness.

"Farewell, my brother!" he murmured. "I shall never see you more until we meet in the land which is very far off, and where sorrow and its memory have alike no existence. The land that is very far off, and yet no man knows how near, the land that may be close to all of us, closer than the shore whither that tossing barque is bound, with her freight of love and loyalty, of hope and daring."

The influence of his calm and monotonous life was strong upon Brother Cyprian; but yet there was a yearning look in his eyes as he gazed over the sea towards the sail—even as he gazed the vessel disappeared—a yearning look, which would have told a keen observer that the strife in his breast was not yet over.

That night a terrific storm arose, and burst in wildest fury over Kilferran Abbey, making breaches in the venerable walls, and uprooting several of the trees that adorned the precinct of the monastery. All the night long the wind howled and raved, and down the coast it was said that the furious, ceaseless thundering of the waves was heard for miles inland. Perhaps, in those old days, when everything beyond one's actual sight was vague, when parting always implied utter uncertainty, and no public service existed for the transmission of intelligence affecting only private individuals, suspense was not so heart-sickening, not such a gnawing at the roots of life as it is now. Brother Cyprian did not expect to hear tidings of Louis, save by chance ; until the Queen's Token should reach him, he did not look for any sure knowledge of his brother's fate ; the tremendous storm, which raged with unabated violence for three days and nights, was in keeping with his own secret feelings, but he made no sign. He had known the schooling of the cloister, and earlier still the schooling of unknown, unshared sorrows : under their joint restraint Brother Cyprian kept his soul in patience. Soon after the subsidence of the tempest rumours of shipwrecks off the

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southern coast, with much loss of life and property, arose, and dismal tales of the crimes of the wreckers were told. But no tidings came to Kilferran of the loss of the ship in which Louis de Valmont had sailed. No spar had drifted in, no drowned sailor, or shattered, wave-tossed shred of ship's gear, to tell of a vain battle with the awful storm-army, and of swift, sure defeat. Days became weeks; the summer waned, but no intelligence of Louis de Valmont reached Brother Cyprian. The Queen's Token came not. Such scraps of straggling intelligence as found their way to Kilferran had no reference to the escape, the release, or any amendment in the condition of the captive Queen. Was Louis dead or living? Had he made the attempt and failed—made it so foolhardily, been so powerless and inconsiderable among Mary's friends and against her enemies that he was merely set aside, killed, perhaps, and no mention of him made the public rumour? Brother Cyprian pondered much upon these things, gravely—not with acute pain indeed, for the accidents of time had sunk, in his mind, to nearly their just insignificance—but no solution of them came. Brother Cyprian looked a good deal older; his habitual

gravity deepened ; and could those among whom he dwelt have heard the words of prayer most frequently upon his lips, they would have even known them for the solemn pleadings of the Jew "De Profundis."

Brother Cyprian and the Prior talked sometimes of the brief visit of Louis de Valmont, and of the trust confided to their keeping. The Prior did not share Brother Cyprian's presentiment, nay, conviction, that Louis de Valmont had perished, either by shipwreck, or in the attempt to execute his project. News indeed came slowly, and was often neither full nor trustworthy when it did come ; but the ship was a large vessel, and there were certain relations between the coast people and her captain and crew, and if she had been wrecked, the intelligence would have reached them somehow. The Prior, admiring the patience of Brother Cyprian, had diligent inquiry made among the coast people, and found that among them there was no fear that the ship was lost. So, the Prior argued that the Chevalier's design was held in abeyance for some good reason ; that time was not ripe, and that Louis held aloof from all communication with his brother, in order not to compromise his associates, or endanger their

ose among whom success. He had told his brother he was to
of prayer most hear of him (urged the Prior) only in a certain
y would have event—when he should need the gold and
leadings of the jewels—and then he would bring, or send him,
the Queen's Token.

or talked some. Soon there arose matters of quite another
s de Valmont, nature to disturb the Prior of Kilferran and his
keeping. The community; the dark and evil days which had
rian's presenti- befallen so many, but had hitherto spared them,
s de Valmont came upon them now. The Lord-Deputy had
ek, or in the heard of Kilferran at last, and, despite the
News indeed remoteness and obscurity of the place, deter-
ther full nor mined to "root out" the monks. Such pro-
t the ship was ceedings as had previously been taken against
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captain and situated that they could not be overlooked, were
l, the intelli- now put in execution against Kilferran Abbey;
nehow. The and the monks were in daily dread and danger
her Cyprian, of being expelled from the sheltering walls of
g the coast their remote dwelling-place. Some timid souls
n there was among the community of the Friars Preachers
o, the Prior regarded the trials which threatened them with
was held in almost womanly terror, but the Prior and
t time was Brother Cyprian were not of that number. In
f from all their frequent conferences respecting what must
der not to be done, if the soldiers of the Lord-Deputy
nger their should come to harry and drive them out, the

subject of the treasure entrusted to Brother Cyprian, by him whose fate was all unknown to them, was often discussed.

"It must be hidden," was the conclusion arrived at by the Prior; "it must be removed from the cellar underneath the buttery where your hands and mine placed it, and concealed with what skill we have, and what precaution we can take. A statement of the nature, the destination, and the hiding-place of the treasure, must be drawn up by you, my son, and kept constantly in the possession of one or other of us, so that in the hour of supreme danger, or death, the holder may have it in his power to communicate the knowledge to another, who can, in his turn, fulfil your brother's intention if called upon to do so."

"Time is passing, father, and I think the Queen's Token will never reach me."

"Even so, some provision must be made for the restoration or other disposition of this treasure."

The Prior and Brother Cyprian studied the plan of the Abbey, a quaint drawing that had been made nearly a century earlier, and they decided on a spot in which to conceal the treasure. One night, in the cold, early spring,

ed to Brother when all was silent in the Abbey, and only the
s all unknown dim red lamp, burning always in the sanctuary,
intruded on the reign of night, the Prior came
the conclusion to Brother Cyprian's cell, and told him he was
st be removed ready. Then the two softly descended to the
buttery where cellar beneath the buttery, where the mail con-
and concealed fided to their care by Louis de Valmont had
nat precaution been deposited. When the Prior had opened
ne nature, the the heavy door, and they stood within the small
f the treasure, vaulted chamber, Brother Cyprian struck a light
on, and kept from flint and steel, and lighted a lantern; then
e or other of they looked for a black streak upon the wall
ne danger, or which indicated the spot where the mail lay.
his power to hidden under sturdy logs of firewood.

another, who
s intention if
I think the
st be made
tion of this
ian studied
rawing that
earlier, and
conceal the
arly spring,
"It is here," said Brother Cyprian, stooping
to remove the logs, and disclosing to view the
stained and torn surface of a leathern valise,
which was, however, strongly lined with iron.
"I know not the precise nature or the exact
value of the contents, but Louis was rich, and
he told me all his wealth was here, except what
he reserved for his maintenance and charges on
his fatal mission. Perhaps there is a list of the
items of this treasure inside the mail."

The Prior held the lamp, and Brother
Cyprian with difficulty carried the leathern
valise—for it was, though small, very heavy—

through the passages and up the winding flight of stone steps that led to the open cloister adjoining the great entrance. At the top there was a massive door of black oak, sheeted with iron, and studded with heavy nails. This door was not barred, and it unclosed noiselessly. The Prior and Brother Cyprian passed through it, and found themselves in the cloister, where some straggling rays of moonlight that pierced the darkness gave additionally weird effect to the gloom.

Brother Cyprian was the chief scribe of the Community. Little writing was in those days necessary to the management of all human affairs outside of diplomacy, in comparison with the present demand for the *littera scripta*; but certain matters had to be transacted by the pen, and Brother Cyprian's services were in tolerably constant demand. He had never passed so much of his time in that same small room with bare white walls, and heavy oaken tables, whither the lay-brother had come, to announce the memorable visit of Louis de Valmont, as immediately after the transfer of the treasure to a secure hiding-place. For many hours on many days the Community saw nothing of

the winding flight of the open cloister. At the top thereof, sheeted with black, he indited an accurate record, during that time he indited an accurate record, of the laborious, cumbrous, slow handwriting of the time, of all that had occurred in relation to his brother, and to the trust of the treasure; and he recorded upon the document his own belief that Louis de Valmont was dead. Writing under this conviction, he added to the statement that he, being the only survivor of Louis, and his natural heir, bequeathed all the gold and jewels contained in the indicated hiding-place to the dwellers in Kilferran Abbey, for their use and absolute disposal. The bequest was to take effect whenever it should become necessary to make the fact of its existence known, owing to the death of Louis de Valmont being ascertained, his (Cyprian's) own death having taken place, and the treasure remaining unclaimed by the Queen of Scots, or any emissary of hers. The said claim, it was stated in the document, was to be recognised as valid, solely on condition of the production of a certain Token, agreed upon by himself and his brother. This Token was to be revealed by him (Cyprian), at the time of his death, to a third person, who should be charged,

under similar conditions, with the transmission of the secret to one individual, preferably the Prior of the Community.

His task completed, Brother Cyprian committed the writings to the custody of the Prior, who placed them in safety, and all trace of the momentous occurrence which had disturbed his life passed away.

Vague rumours of the discovery of conspiracies for the overthrow of Elizabeth, for the placing of Mary Stuart upon the English throne, and even for the rescue of the Queen of Scots without any defined ulterior purpose, had come to Kilferran; but no tongue syllabled De Valmont's name, and no incident in the various stories which were in circulation seemed to the Prior or to Brother Cyprian to have any reference to Louis, either under his own, or under an assumed designation. Neither had any tidings been heard of the ship, and the inquiries made by the Prior now received desponding answers. Brother Cyprian entertained no farther hope, and after awhile he fell sick. He strove for some time with the declining strength, the waning energy, the dulness and supineness of mind and body which were daily making havoc with him; he filled his

place in choir, in pulpit, in refectory, in the sanctuary. His eloquence was not the less burning that he had the strength to use it but seldom; within and without the Community he gained hearts which he had not previously touched. So convinced was Brother Cyprian—over whom was the strange enlightening influence of approaching death—that his brother no longer lived, that he requested the Prior to permit the celebration of a solemn requiem for Louis; and this was granted.

With the sword of persecution hanging over their heads, the monks of Kilferran assembled for the function. Their homely chapel was hung, their uncostly altar was draped in black, and never had the strains of the "De Profundis" risen to heaven from those venerable walls with a more piercing and mournful wail. The voice of Brother Cyprian was heard among the voices of the brethren, with an agony of supplication in its tone, in which some present discerned warning and farewell. From that day his stall in the choir, his place in the refectory, knew him no more, and before long it became noised abroad in the little world which surrounded the Abbey, that Brother Cyprian was dying. The slow, insidious diseases of later

times were much less known in other days, when all the conditions and habits of life were simpler and hardier. Men died of fevers, of plague, of the "black death." They lived, in general, a shorter time than the people of this epoch in the world's history live, and were counted aged men when our contemporaries are reckoned in the middle term of life. There were unusual and mysterious symptoms about this mortal sickness of Brother Cyprian—long trances of seeming unconsciousness, in which no sound of any human voice could so reach him as to arouse recognition; yet sometimes his face wore a happy smile, as though there were some presence by his bed, unseen by the watchers, who were patient, unskilful men, with only goodwill to bring to their task. Again, muttered sounds of pleading, of dread, of remonstrance, for the most part inarticulate, but awfully expressive, broke the stillness of night, and chilled the hearts of the hearers. They had little experience of minds diseased, and Brother Cyprian was not to be suspected of a burdened conscience, of a troubled soul. And yet in those ramblings of the mind, freeing itself from the fragile, fading body, there was agitation; wild vagaries of memory distracted the dying

man ; names which belonged to another country, to a phase of history out of which the world had passed, came frequently from his lips. There was now much coming and going to and from Kilferran Abbey, and troubled consultations took place between the Prior and the monks, and the strangers who brought them confirmation and warning of evil days near at hand. But, amid all this, undisturbed by the pressing trouble and danger, occupied by quite other thoughts, dragged back to the life which he had so long ago renounced, by that mysterious power which rules the spirit of the dying, Brother Cyprian lay on his death-bed.

Late one night, when the whole Community, save only the watchers, had retired to their cells, one of the latter came to the Prior, and told him that the monk desired to see him. The Prior instantly complied with the summons, and, on entering the cell, found Cyprian awake, quite sensible and calm, but with a look in his dark, worn, feeble face, which can never be mistaken by any who have once seen it—that look which tells that death is very near. The monk's thin, transparent hands were stretched out before him and clasped, and his eyes were closed ;

but they opened as the Prior approached, and all the trouble, the restlessness, the vague anguish which had been in them of late, was gone.

"You sent for me, my son," said the Prior, advancing to the side of the rude pallet on which the dying man lay.

"Yes, father; I want to speak with you alone. My time is very short. Let the Community pray for me, and do you hear my last confession."

For some weeks no such clear and coherent words had come from Brother Cyprián's lips.

"And now," said the dying man, when his confession was ended, and silence had prevailed for a little while, "I will tell you how I know this is the end, that my last night on earth is passing on to the morning."

"Tell me, my son," said the Prior, whose habitual composure was severely taxed, for he loved the dutiful and zealous monk with more than the perfunctory affection supposed to be inherent in a "superior," and he had just listened to a strange and melancholy history. "You are not suffering, and I am not leech enough to read the subtle signs of approaching dissolution. I must summon our brother infirmarian."

"Not yet, not yet, for a little while. This, father, is how I know the truth. It was not quite midnight when I awoke from a refreshing sleep and found my brother Louis standing beside me."

The Prior started up; he believed that delirium had again seized upon the sufferer. But Brother Cyprian caught his robe in his feeble hand, and assuring him that he was not raving, entreated him to sit still and let him speak. There was no disturbance in his face, no hurry or incoherence in his voice, and the Prior, inexplicably constrained, obeyed him.

"There, opposite to where you are sitting, I saw Louis. He was dressed as he was when he left us that morning, which, until yesterday, seemed so long ago, and now for its nearness might be yesterday. The shining courage was gone from his face, but there was a light in it such as I have never seen, and yet seem to know. He stood just there, and gazed at me, and I spoke to him, not with my lips, but as spirit speaks to spirit; and so he answered me, but not in words of this world. I told him that I was not afraid; that I knew he had been released long since, and now knew he was come to tell me my own time was at

hand. And the spirit of my brother said to my spirit, that it was so; and, father, listen, listen that you may be very sure"—the monk raised himself slowly, and lifted one hand in solemn asseveration—"my brother bent over me, nearer and nearer, and I was not afraid. His hand was hidden in his breast, until he was quite close to me; but then he withdrew it, and touched my lips with something that it held."

"My God! with what?" said the Prior, in a hoarse whisper.

A faint smile dawned on Brother Cyprian's face, as he fell gently back, and his outstretched hand dropped at his side—

"WITH THE QUEEN'S TOKEN."

The grass had not covered the new-made grave in the monks' burial-ground at Kilferran when the worst that the Community feared befell them—the destruction of their home, and their own dispersion. This was the time of which the Annals of the Four Masters tell, when "Sir Henry Sydney, Lord Justice of Ireland, marched with a great force against the people of Munster, after the peace and league which they had ratified. The direction which he took was through the south-west of Leinster, and he did

not halt until he entered the territory of Hy Maccaille in Munster, and having constructed a strong camp of active forces at Baile-na-Martra, and remained for a week besieging the town, the Momonicans threatened every day of that week to give battle to the Lord Justice and his force, which, however, they did not put into execution. The town was at length taken by the Lord Justice, and he garrisoned it on behalf of the Queen, and then proceeded onward to Cork, and remained some time, when several of the insurgents, adherents of James, Earl of Desmond, came to seek protection and pardon. Then the Lord Justice went thence to Limerick, and destroyed portions of the town of Munster between Cork and Limerick. . . . The Lord Justice returned to Dublin at the end of that harvest, after he had victoriously brought the country under subjection; and no Viceroy of Ireland, with such a force as he commanded, ever performed so prosperous an expedition as he did on that occasion."

It was this prosperous expedition against the Desmonds that furnished the occasion for the suppression of Kilferran Abbey, and the taking possession of it for the use of the English authorities. The transaction was of the simplest,

according to the record of it: the misery and suffering it created were no more than ordinary at that time, and in many lands.

The decree went forth thus (the date is 1569): "The meetest places for President to lie in is as followeth: To have a house in town of Ballycashel, and to have in all the country of Pubbelbrian to be lotted unto him for his provisions. The meetest house there is St. Dominic's Abbey of Kilferran, which is the Earl of Desmond's lands. Also to have the Grey Friars of Adare for his dwelling-house, and to have in farm from the Queen's Majesty all the Abbey tithes and glebe lands belonging to the same town, the house being called the Grey Friars and the White Friars."

So, Sir Henry Sydney, in the plenitude of his power, and with all the triumph of his conquest, came to Kilferran, and took possession in the name of the Queen's Majesty, and his troopers harried the monks and drove them away, they making only passive resistance and little plaint, but the people looking on terrified, and with anger subdued by fear in their hearts. The graves of the brethren—happily released before these evil days—were trampled under foot by the soldiery; the chapel was stripped

of its ornaments: these were not very valuable, but, being melted down, their price kept the troopers in drink for some time. When the rough division of the spoil was made among the men by an umpire of their own choosing, there was loud and angry dispute concerning the cumbrous brazen lectern that had been in the chapel for many scores of years, and was valuable, not only for its weight in beaten and chased metal, but also for the ruby eyes of the eagle in whose form it was wrought. The fame of this lectern had reached the ears of the Lord Justice's soldiers, and they resented its disappearance as a wrong done to their claims as licensed spoliators. But none could gain, or give, tidings of the goodly wrought-metal eagle, with spread wings and fretted throat, behind whose noble, stern shelter the Gospel had been pronounced daily for more years than any man there could have told, and not even by threats of torture could the soldiery induce the monks to reveal its hiding-place. Indeed, there was but one among them who could have revealed it—the Prior. He was the last who lingered about the ancient precinct, after the others had been driven out to seek the precarious hospitality of the frightened country people, until oppor-

tunity should offer for their joining some other community of their order. Late on the evening of the day which witnessed the final dispersion of the monks of Kilferran, some of the soldiers, and a few people of the vicinity, who had timidly offered them the friendship of fear, entered the denuded chapel. The light was dim, and the stripped walls and undecorated altar presented a rueful picture of desolation. In the gloom they discovered a figure lying prone upon the outermost step of the sanctuary, the head resting against the altar rails. It was the Prior, and he was quite dead, his face bearing no mark of violence or distortion. The long heavy sleeves of his white robe were tightly wrapped round an object closely held against his breast. When they were loosed, the crucifix, which had stood for ages upon the altar, fell from their folds. The Prior's face was serene and happy; he had evidently died without a struggle. But the monks held ever firmly that the last Prior of Kilferran died of a broken heart.

The new possessors of Kilferran Abbey were rough and warlike men, but not exceptionally brutal, and they suffered a remnant of the brethren, who still lingered near, to lay their

Prior in the monks' burial-ground. They made his grave beside that of Brother Cyprian, and when he rested there the secret of the treasure confided by Louis de Valmont to the keeping of Kilferran was buried with him.

The monks contrived to detach some of the reliquaries and other *ex voto* gifts from the walls of the monastery chapel, but the iron heart-shaped case, that contained so unsuspected a gem, was not among the number. Neither did it fall into the hands of the soldiery. No one remembered that there had been such a thing, or marked that it was missing.

So came the evil days upon Kilferran Abbey, and it was good for Brother Cyprian that he was at rest—he and his secret. The years rolled on and on. The Abbey ceased to be garrisoned, or in any way inhabited ; and, like all places which having once been the dwellings of men, keep within their shattered walls something of the subtle essence of the human life which has been, it had a grim and sinister repute. The Abbey was haunted, people said ; not by the gleesome, mischievous, soulless fairies, the “good people” whose “rings” and “hills” were numerous in those parts, but by the sad, unresting, awful

spirits of the dead, flitting solemnly through the ancient cloisters, now ruined and laid low; open to the beating of the melancholy rain, and the wailing of the far-sweeping wind.

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CHAPTER IV.

GEMMA

SIXTY years ago, visitors to Cornwall, who were not then numerous, had their attention carefully directed to the situation and the architecture of Tredethlyn Castle, the ancestral dwelling of Sir Bernard Tredethlyn, and to the beauty and luxuriance of the gardens stretching seawards under the castellated walls of a mansion which had all that is most romantic in natural scenery to recommend it, and no drawback but its remoteness. It was out of the way of all but special visitors, and situated in a district whose inhabitants had preserved the traditions and customs of olden times with surprising fidelity. The castle was a stately dwelling, and during the centuries of its existence it had housed a stately race, true to the ancient fealties in faith and in politics. The Tredethlyns of Tre-

dethlyn had never conformed to the Established religion, nor, while the Standard of the House of Stuart was raised anywhere, had they acknowledged the House of Hanover. There had been many exiles among the Tredethlyns, when their sentiments were made obnoxiously perceptible to the parties in power and possession, whether in Church or in State, and confiscation and fines had lessened their wealth considerably. But through all, the Tredethlyns kept their faith, and held their ancestral home. Sometimes the castle had no sojourner within its precincts for a score of years together, except the few old retainers of the family left in charge of it; sometimes right noble state was kept there. But, in the latter case, the company invariably included many foreign elements. Frenchmen, Italians, Spaniards, were welcomed to Tredethlyn, and came and went, retaining an impression of the place where they had been so hospitably entertained, as though it were an enchanted castle in a fairy tale, embowered in roses, laurels, myrtles, and flowering shrubs, with far outlying ramparts of great cliffs, and the guardian sea beyond. The Tredethlyns of Tredethlyn were remarkable for their foreign alliances. Dark-eyed, dark-haired women, with a southern flush

upon their handsome faces, and the graceful freedom of the South in their carriage and gestures, who spoke no word of the English tongue, had come over the sea, from beyond that Mont St. Michel which on the other side of the Channel repeated theirs, the Cornish people had heard say, and wedded with the Tredethlyns. None of the race had ever married beneath him; the ladies who had ruled in the ancient Cornish castle had all been noble, and even in one instance there had been talk of royal lineage. But the people did not know much of that. A distant kinswoman of the King of France had been saved, in awful times, from the dangers of royalty in her own country, and by a Tredethlyn, so ran the story; and she had married her preserver, and lived in the Cornish castle only just long enough to leave him a little daughter, who grew up and in her turn married a Tredethlyn, her own cousin, and her father's heir. Blanche Tredethlyn also died young, and left a daughter.

It was traditional in the family, that all its members, when in England, resided at home. The old feudal spirit dwelt strongly in them; they loved their people, as they still called their tenants and neighbours, who, being still a primi-

tive people, loved them. But the Tredethlyns were a travelled race, and even in the later times, the castle was often empty, while its masters were exploring the beauties of Nature, or the treasures of Art, in distant lands.

From a long spell of such emptiness and silence the castle was aroused, in early summer time, sixty years ago, by the return of Sir Bernard Tredethlyn, with a numerous company, including his only daughter, a young French lady her friend, and several servants. The people were very curious to see Sir Bernard's daughter, who had been sent to France, and placed in the charge of certain persons of rank, just then basking in the light of the second Restoration, and who were relations of her mother. The young lady of Tredethlyn Castle would be no unimportant person among her humbler neighbours. A Tredethlyn had never been known to contract a second marriage, even when no male heir had been born to him, and Sir Bernard was not likely to depart from the customs of his forefathers in this respect. The estates in Cornwall were entailed on heirs male, but there was no doubt that Miss Tredethlyn would remain undisputed mistress of the castle. It was said in the Duchy during her

father's lifetime that Sir Bernard had saved large sums of money for the purpose of purchasing such a landed estate for his daughter, as should place her, at his death, or her marriage, in a position almost of equality with his successor in the Cornish property. Sir Bernard had been travelling in Ireland for some time before he joined Miss Tredethlyn in Paris, and people had heard tell that he had bought a fine place there, down in the South, but that there was no house upon it; only a very ancient ruin.

All this was hitherto only hearsay, and the chief concern of the place was that Sir Bernard and his daughter were coming home, and that it was to be hoped the young lady was nice in her ways, and could speak like other people, and not only "gibberish"—though this latter was to be apprehended, considering that she had lived so long in a place where it was natural for every one to talk gibberish, more was the pity.

Sir Bernard and his daughter arrived duly, and were greeted with the simple heartiness, devoid of servility, that characterises the Cornish peasantry. The carriages were closely scrutinised as they passed the groups collected at the gates of the castle, and along the road, every one

being desirous of catching the first glimpse of Miss Tredethlyn.

There was but one opinion of the young lady's personal appearance, as freely expressed as it was unanimous.

"Did ever eyes see a more beautiful face?" the men and women asked each other; "such a fine, ruddy colour, and such piercing, bright black eyes, and such dark, thick curls, and such a smile? When she got out of the carriage with her little dog in her arms, she looked like a queen." The speakers were still lingering about, giving vent to their admiration, when Daniel Penfold, the steward, came down from the castle, and joined the foremost of the groups. They once more commented on Miss Tredethlyn's beauty, grace, and, above all, on her height, that physical quality so specially admirable in the eyes of the Cornish people.

Daniel Penfold looked at first puzzled, then amused, finally he said, with a laugh :

"Tut, tut! you are all wrong together. The young lady with the black eyes and hair, who is so tall and slender, and looks as if the castle and everything in it belonged to her, is not Miss Tredethlyn."

"Not Miss Tredethlyn!" exclaimed the chief

spokeswoman of the party. "Who is she, then? And what is Miss Tredethlyn like?"

"That young lady is a friend of Miss Tredethlyn's. She is French, and I don't know her name—it is a plaguily long one; but I heard Miss Tredethlyn call her Gemma, which is French for Emma, I suppose. As for Miss Blanche, she is a pale little thing, and looks more like the French young lady's waiting-maid. She sat beside her in the first carriage, but no wonder nobody saw her. She used to be such a pretty child, too."

"Dangerous company for Miss Blanche," said a shrewd-looking old woman, who had followed the steward's words with keen attention. "She'd ha' done better to leave her after her in her own country. She'll be setting her cap at Sir Bernard, and putting Miss Blanche out of her place next."

"No, no, Mother Skirrow," said the steward, "no fear of that. A Tredethlyn marries but one wife. And for all she's so pale, and thin, and little, Sir Bernard thinks there's nothing like his daughter, that's easy to be seen; and they do say there isn't, in point of learning and such like, speaking foreign languages, and playing music."

Miss Tredethlyn had been so long absent that she had almost as much sense of novelty in making her friend acquainted with her home, as the handsome young Frenchwoman had in being introduced to the ancient, stately mansion. Tredethlyn Castle combined the grandeur of the old and the comfort and elegance of modern times, as only the feudal dwellings of England combine them. The two girls roamed through the long galleries, the quaint, rich chambers, and the ancient turrets, where a ghostly assemblage of old furniture and antique chests supplied them with objects of curiosity and interest. The house was rich in ancient china, in books and manuscripts, and in many specimens of carved wood. The treacherous sea had often cast up rich treasures, whose owners it held in its bosom for evermore, on that wild coast; and many of the most famous and prized possessions of Tredethlyn were of Spanish origin, the spoils of noble ships lost in the fatal expedition against England in the old, old times. In the north gallery under the long lanceolated windows, there stood two huge chests of some precious black wood, carved so richly and so curiously, that many who had seen them said the Florentine palaces had nothing more beau-

tiful or costly to show, and that, with their scrolls and garlands, their angels' heads and cunningly-twisted silver handles, they were fit to have been the coffers of a queen. Many bits of quaint jewellery and armour were also among the castle's gear, and there was a story current that a Venice glass had once been borne inshore uninjured, and carried to the then lady of Tredethlyn, who gave the salvage men a rich reward, and had the glass placed in her own chamber. But the next morning it lay broken on the floor, and the lady told her waiting-woman that she had thrown it down by accident, and accounted for her paleness and disorder by saying it was of ill omen to break a mirror. People said, however, that it had afterwards come to be known—the lady not being able to keep the knowledge of the terrible thing undivulged—that she had dashed the mirror to the ground in a sudden access of terror, having seen in it another face by the side of her own. The face was that of a woman, very pale and sorrowful, but dignified and beautiful beyond belief, with hazel eyes and rich brown hair, gathered under a strange head-dress, the like of which the lady of Tredethlyn had never seen. As she looked into the mirror, the fair face

grew dim, and began to fade; and then a slender hand was passed across the white throat, and the face was gone. Such was the story which was whispered round about Tredethlyn, and it is certain that the lady caused every atom of the broken glass to be buried in the earth, and that she entreated her husband, Sir Michael, to take her away from the castle, which, she declared, was haunted.

In the chapel attached to the castle there were also many pieces of deeply-carven wood, and other waifs from the sea; notably the wrought brass sanctuary lamp, with its long swinging chains, which had belonged to a noble ship that had gone to pieces off the coast of Cornwall, with a Spanish bishop on board. Not a life was saved, but many of the drowned were washed ashore, and the Spanish bishop's grave was made before the altar in the chapel of Tredethlyn Castle. Blanche and her friend heard these and many other histories from the old priest, who had lived there since before her birth; he had, indeed, been her grandfather's private chaplain, and was still her father's, and pastor of the scanty flock who dwelt in the vicinity of the castle. Mr. Vaughan was a learned man, quite a recluse, with great local

knowledge. He had not seen much of the world, and he disliked what he had seen; but he was very tranquil and happy at Tredethlyn, where he took care of the library, and watched over the well-being of the pictures. Mr. Vaughan was perhaps not particularly pleased to learn that his beloved solitude was about to be interrupted by the return of Sir Bernard and his daughter; but he soon became reconciled to the change, and much interested in Blanche and in her young friend. Their tastes were similar to his, while their knowledge was immeasurably inferior, so that he had the pleasure of constantly instructing them.

Mr. Vaughan accompanied the friends in their exploration of the ancient portions of the castle, and he brought out of the storehouse of his memory innumerable traditions, legends, and veritable histories, wherewith he enriched every nook and corner of the old building, and fostered the taste for romance common to the two girls who were otherwise unlike. His learning enabled him to assign a date to every object, and to resuscitate the history of its time; to conjure up the spirits of the past, and surround his companions—his pupils, they called themselves—with the atmosphere of the chivalrous and legendary ages.

The isolation of Tredethlyn Castle was highly prized by its young mistress. She had many visitors, it is true, but they came at stated times, made the usual stay, and then departed, leaving her time free, not subject to the constant, meaningless interruptions which are the bane of modern society. There was none of the mindlessness and soullessness of fashionable existence in her luxurious, stately life. Sir Bernard and his daughter might have been a sixteenth-century *seigneur* and *châtelaine*, in their feudal dignity, their tenure of honour and obedience, and their active share in the local conditions and interests. The apprehensions of Mother Skirrow were not realised. Sir Bernard was very kind to his daughter's friend, strictly courteous to his foreign guest ; but he was, perhaps, the only one who had ever seen the two together, without perceiving that Blanche was not to be compared in external charms with the beautiful, graceful, accomplished, dignified, and high-spirited Gemma di Valdimonte.

Blanche Tredethlyn was not a pretty girl. She had indeed no beauty, except such as might be found in the unusual depth and nobility of expression of her dark-grey eyes, and in the soft, pathetic lines of her mouth which bore

the impress of refinement and gentle nurture. She was pale, slight, and small, and her face wore a thoughtful, dreamy expression, which marred its youthfulness, and spoke to the observant of a mind matured and serious beyond her years.

"Your name is Italian, but your language is French," said Mr. Vaughan to Gemma di Valdimonte a few days after the arrival of the party at Tredethlyn, and when the girls were examining the lumber-room already mentioned.

"I am French," replied Gemma, "by birth, by distant parentage, and by predilection. My immediate ancestors lived in Piedmont, our family is French, as our name once was; but it has been Italianised, according to the custom. I believe we could compete with Miss Tredethlyn herself, in point of antiquity of race, and the vicissitudes of our family fortunes."

"You must tell Mr. Vaughan the story, Gemma. He is as enthusiastic about things of the kind as papa and I, and far better informed, papa says. Why, Mr. Vaughan, Gemma's family was of old nobility in France, in the days of the Valois, and they lost all in the cause of Queen Mary."

"A good cause, a good cause! I should

highly honour their memory, and hold such a family tradition as a great treasure," said Mr. Vaughan.

Gemma smiled. "So I do," she replied; "but it is an unsubstantial treasure, and, unhappily, the only one belonging to us. We are French, as I said before, and our name is De Valmont. Ages ago, when Henri II. was King of France, and the Queen of Scotland was betrothed to the Dauphin, the Comte de Valmont was one of the gentlemen-in-waiting to the young prince. He was an odd sort of man, and though young and handsome, and in high favour, he suddenly left the Court and the world, and went into a monastery—I don't know where—and there was an end of it. He left almost all his wealth to his younger brother, the Chevalier de Valmont; and he, too, disappeared, but not, so far as was known or surmised, into a monastery. The brothers had an uncle with whom their father had quarrelled, and whom they had never seen. He lived in Gascony, when he was not following a soldier's fortune, and my father is descended from him. This Claude de Valmont was in the service of Philibert of Savoy after the peace, and finally settled in Piedmont, but not until he had

endeavoured to trace the fate of his nephews, to whose property he would have been entitled. It was owing to his efforts, and the powerful motive which prompted them, that so much of the history of our family in those old, old times was preserved. But really those times don't seem so very old either, in this castle, and among so many relics of them. After his brother quitted the Court, Louis de Valmont fell into disgrace, in consequence of his devotion to the Queen of Scotland. When she went so reluctantly to the black northern kingdom, the young man made part of her suite; and after he had returned to France, with her other friends and would-be protectors, he never ceased to urge her cause. Shortly after the story of her rigorous imprisonment in England reached France, the Chevalier de Valmont left Paris, having, it was supposed, turned the greater part of his wealth into jewels—it was certain he had purchased a large quantity—and travelled to Bordeaux. There he took ship on board a trading-vessel, and he was never again heard of. Claude de Valmont claimed and received any remnant of the Chevalier's fortune which could be realised; and the *procès* was preserved among the family records. Whether the

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Chevalier went to England to conspire in the Queen's cause, and fell a victim to his enterprise, or whether he perished at sea, was never known. The old castle in Piedmont, in which my father's ancestors were born, contained, until lately, a painting which my father prized beyond anything in his possession."

"Prized!" said Mr. Vaughan, who had listened with deep interest to Gemma's story. "Is it then his no longer?"

"He has been obliged by circumstances to part with it. A large price was offered to him for the painting by an agent of the English Government, but just as he was painfully making up his mind to accept the offer, a friend made him a still more liberal proposal."

Gemma looked at Blanche and smiled, and Miss Tredethlyn returned the smile, while a faint flush of pleasure suffused her pale cheek.

Mr. Vaughan interpreted the girls' looks.

"That picture is yours, Miss Tredethlyn?" he said.

"It is my father's, Mr. Vaughan. You will soon be able to tell us what you think of the painting; it will delight you, I am sure, because it is in keeping with all your pet antiquities here. It depicts the marriage of the

Queen of Scots with the Dauphin Francois; and the tradition in Gemma's family is that the young pair sat, or rather stood, for the portraits, so that they are fact, not fancy. I am so glad to think it is to be here; the castle will seem more like home to Gemma when she has that picture before her eyes."

"Is it not yet unpacked?"

"No. My father is going to have it hung in the picture-gallery; but it is in London now, being re-framed. I fear it will not arrive in time for my birthday. There are to be wonderful doings then, you know, and I am to be made ever so much of. Papa is so busy about it all, he can think of nothing else. Gemma and I have *carte blanche* for our dresses, and we really don't know what to do with it."

"I am afraid I cannot advise you in that matter," said Mr. Vaughan.

Gemma had moved away from the others, and was looking out of a window. Blanche whispered to the priest:

"I wish she could be in my place, though I should not quite like to be in hers."

"And wherein is she better fitted for yours?"

"In that she is so beautiful, so graceful,

so self-possessed. I suppose it's wrong, Mr. Vaughan; but I can't help believing in destiny, and it seems to me she is born for all kind of good fortune, and I for all kind of failure. Now, I know you are going to scold me; but indeed you need not. I know how foolish this is, and that any other person might think me low-minded, envious, even jealous of Gemma's beauty and fascination. But you will not; you understand me."

"I understand you perfectly, Miss Tredethlyn."

"Have you no more treasures to show us in this part of the castle?" asked Gemma, coming towards them; "no more carved oak, or wrought silver, or tapestry, or anything?"

"No more," said Mr. Vaughan. "There are some other curious things — old manuscripts, Books of Hours, and so forth; but they are in the library, and you know them all."

"I hope all these things are not heirlooms," said Gemma. "Nobody will ever care so much about them as Blanche. It is bad enough to think of the dear old castle going into other hands."

"No," said Blanche. "Papa has told me that those things are to be mine. I must build

a house, I suppose, at that beautiful place he has bought in Ireland. So like papa—was it not?—to select the remotest spot he could hear of, and set up a museum of antiquities! There is a beautiful ruin, to begin with, papa tells me. What is the name of the place?"

"Kilferran Abbey," replied Mr. Vaughan. "It was a Dominican monastery once, and the whole district suffered much in former, and indeed in later, penal days. But it is even more secluded, I fancy, than Tredethlyn. I don't think you will ever live there."

"Oh, yes, I shall," returned Blanche. "Gemma and I will live there whenever I have to see Tredethlyn pass into other hands. Papa talks of taking us to see the place next year."

The preparations for the celebration of Miss Tredethlyn's birthday were made on a scale of great splendour. The fête was to be a double discharge of social obligations—the first large entertainment given by Sir Bernard, and the formal assumption by his daughter of her place at the head of his household. The castle was full of guests, and the accommodation afforded by two neighbouring inns, although of a humble kind, was secured by Sir Bernard for several of the bachelor members of the party.

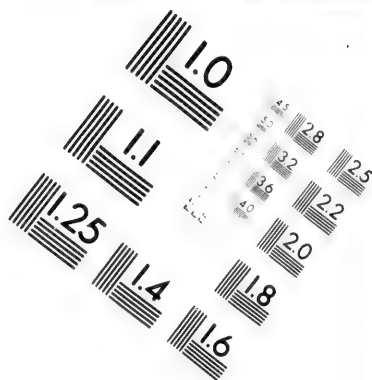
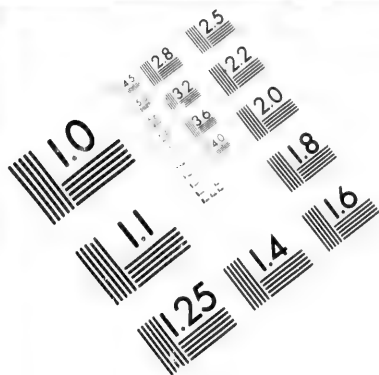
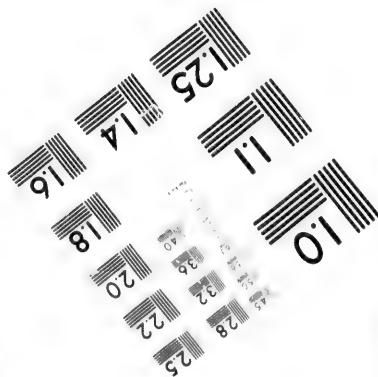
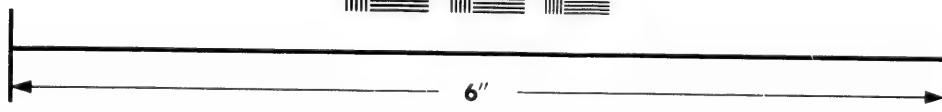
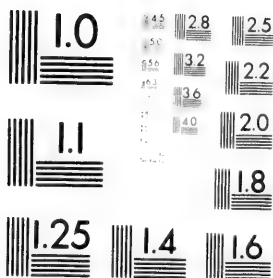


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The day came, and the guests assembled in good time for the dinner with which the festivities were formally to begin. Dressing-rooms were occupied; maids tripped to and fro, taking notes of toilettes for the warning or encouragement of their respective ladies; a pleasant air of bustle and anticipated pleasure spread itself over the house. Miss Tredethlyn was as yet invisible. She had been summoned to her father's private sitting-room, where she found him, attended by Mr. Vaughan and a grave and business-like personage, before whom lay some very important-looking documents. Sir Bernard had summoned his daughter by a line of writing, which directed her to come to him *alone*, and she was therefore unaccompanied by Gemma. Her father and the other two gentlemen rose to receive her, and she faltered for a moment, daunted by a certain solemnity in their aspect.

Blanche Tredethlyn had never looked so well. Her dress, pure white, of very simple form, but rich material, suited her slender figure, and harmonised with the refined lines and thoughtful cast of her face.

"This is Mr. Maldon, Blanche," said Sir Bernard, taking her hand and leading her to the

table. "He has brought the papers relative to the purchase of Kilferran, and those by which I bestow it on you. Kilferran is yours from this day, my dear."

Blanche said nothing, but clung to her father, with tears gathering in her eyes.

"Don't cry, you silly child, or Mr. Maldon will think you very unfit to manage your property—he wants to consult you about it to-morrow. And now"—he took a leather case from the table—"I am going to give you my real birthday present."

Sir Bernard raised the cover, and displayed a string of magnificent pearls, lustrous, sheeny, soft, and exquisitely-shaped, resting on a bed of dark blue velvet. Blanche uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Oh, papa, I never saw such pearls!"

"They are very fine, my dear, the finest I could get. But how do you like the pendant?" He lifted the necklace from its case and hung it over her hand. The pendant was of a fashion such as Blanche had never seen. It was a fair balas-ruby, heart-shaped, clear, smooth, and red like blood; laid upon it, with a well-feigned carelessness, was one softly-white pearl. The girl gazed at this superb jewel, speechless

with admiration and delight. The first words she spoke were :

“It must have cost a fortune.”

“Not to me,” said her father. “That jewel, Blanche, is one of the ancient treasures of Tredethlyn ; but it is not an heirloom, and I have always intended that on this day it should be yours.”

“Was it—was it mamma’s ?” asked Blanche in an agitated voice.

“No, my child. You will be the first who has ever worn it, since it came out of the sea. Mr. Vaughan has not told you the story, because I wished you to see the jewel to-day for the first time. One hundred and fifty years ago, on a fearfully tempestuous night, a huge mass of the cliff beyond the sea-front of Tredethlyn fell, and when the sea went down, and adventurous boatmen explored the new face of the coast, they found the entrance to an immense cave, whose existence had never been suspected, laid bare. Craggy rocks hollowed into caverns formed its sides, and in their crevices, among wisps of seaweed, shells, and all the *débris* of the sea, were found strange, ghastly relics of shipwreck and ruin. Many a skeleton could have been formed of the scattered bones ; of the more

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durable objects, such as metals, some remained in comparative preservation. For long after, it was a favourite and dangerous pursuit to explore the Spaniard's cave at low water. The people called it the Spaniard's cave, because they found there the remains of a ship's figure-head carved in a Spanish fashion. There was ready market at Tredethlyn for such waifs as they chose to sell to Sir Hugh, but they were for the most part worthless. One of the things brought to the castle was a short, very strong chain, formed of metal links, and crusted thick with rust, but not decayed ; to this a small metal purse was attached. The thing looked, when I saw it first, now thirty years ago, like a lump of rusty iron, nothing more. No one thought about it, I presume, or, if any one did, it was taken for an amulet or a reliquary ; at all events, in Sir Hugh's time, in Sir Dennis's, and in the time of all the later Tredethlyns, it lay unnoticed, in the cabinet of shells and stones, in the library, until a short time ago, when Mr. Vaughan and I, rearranging the cabinet, found the piece of rusty chain, and set to work to clean it. In doing this, we wrenched open the rust-eaten purse, and found in it what we thought was a pebble. We got it out with some

difficulty, and saw that the thing was wrapped in leather. Imagine our astonishment when we dislodged the splendid gem that"—here Sir Bernard hung the pearls on his daughter's neck—"now becomes you so well."

"Just the same as it is?" asked Blanche in amazement.

"Just the same, except that it has been in the hands of a clever jeweller, who has furbished it up. By the way, Vaughan, Jacobson was mightily puzzled by my balas-ruby, and very curious about its origin. He says that no such design is known to the jewel-workers now."

"I dare say not. I wish we could know its history; it is like one of the sentimental, emblematical, romantic jewels of Queen Elizabeth's time, of which one finds mention in the old records."

While her father and Mr. Vaughan were speaking, Blanche was looking down thoughtfully at the jewel upon her breast.

"Gemma will wonder at it," she said; "and she and I will make many a story out of our own imagination about the hands it has passed through. How long ago do you think it is, papa, since the ship was lost, and the lady who wore this ruby was drowned?"

"God only knows, my darling. We can't tell whether the jewel came out of a lost ship, although that is most probable, or whether a man or a woman wore and lost it. It may have made part of a jeweller's cargo, you know."

"What! carefully enclosed in an iron purse? No, no. A lady wore that ruby heart, and she was handsome and grand! Thank you, papa, a thousand times, for your beautiful, beautiful present. Gemma and I will make up our minds about the story of the lady, and we will tell it to you when you've time to listen."

CHAPTER V.

BLANCHE

THE birthday festival was a brilliant one; Sir Bernard Tredethlyn had the gratification of seeing his daughter take her place with all the grace and propriety of a Tredethlyn, and feeling that the *entente cordiale* between him and his neighbours, which his long absence might have endangered, was intact. Next to Miss Tredethlyn, who naturally commanded the chief share of the general attention, her friend, Gemma di Valdimonte, was the observed of all observers; to this her novelty no less than her beauty contributed. The richness and taste of her dress, the elegance of her figure, and the grace of her dancing, were popular themes, especially among the young men, while there was no small curiosity among the elder ladies concerning this beautiful foreigner. That she was

Miss Tredethlyn's "companion" was a notion to be flouted with scorn; she was much too handsome, too "superior," for that kind of thing, and it was known that she was highly born. No, this brilliant girl was the bosom friend of Miss Tredethlyn, and the attachment between them was deeply interesting; especially as Gemma was so much better-looking than Miss Tredethlyn. Sir Bernard would perhaps have been mortified if he had heard the frequent remarks made among the groups in his stately rooms, on this disparity, and if he had known that for one approving comment on his daughter's looks, a score were devoted to her jewels.

The fame of the splendid necklace and its pendant spread quickly through the rooms. The story of the ruby heart had been told by Mr. Vaughan at dinner with great success, and afterwards Blanche had handed round the jewel for inspection. As Gemma re-clasped the chain of pearls around her neck she whispered:

"I have seen a jewel like that before."

"Have you, Gemma? Where?"

"I will tell you, or rather I will show you, another time."

There was no more opportunity for the girls

to talk just then ; both were swept into the crowd of dancers ; but Blanche caught Gemma's smile of meaning many times, and it added a new and delightful mystery to the romances that her brain was weaving, even in that busy scene, about the former story of the ruby heart bearing the pearly tear. And when the ball was over and her guests had retired, when Blanche had said good night to her father, and she and Gemma were alone again, she recurred to the subject. But Gemma put her off laughingly.

"You are too curious," she said, "and I am determined to administer a moral lesson to you, by not gratifying your inquisitiveness until I choose. I shan't tell you where I saw a jewel like that, until—until—you must wait even to know until when."

Blanche submitted to the playful imperiousness of her friend, and laying the necklace by, she began to talk about the ball.

"What a number of strange faces," said Blanche, "and yet familiar names ; I know every one in the room almost by name, except the officers, and no one in reality. Did you enjoy it very much, Gemma ? Which of your partners did you like best ?"

"I enjoyed it very much," said Gemma,

"and I liked Captain Ramsay best. He was the handsomest man in the room."

"You danced with him early in the night, I think?"

"Yes, and late too. He bespoke the last dance. Which of your partners did you like best?"

"I don't know," said Blanche Tredethlyn, but her answer was not sincere.

Captain Ruthven Ramsay was one of the bachelor guests of Sir Bernard, and quarters had been secured for him at an inn. He was only a captain in a line regiment, with very little to live on in addition to his pay, and being the younger son of a family as notoriously poor as it was undeniably distinguished, he had no particular expectations. He was indeed about the last on the "young men" list of that season, upon whom the fashionable mothers of Society looked with favour. Those fashionable mothers were careful to explain to their daughters that it would be unprincipled on the part of Captain Ramsay if he should attempt to marry otherwise than for money. Hitherto Captain Ruthven Ramsay had not put any temptation to disobedience in the way of the fair pupils in the school of expediency; he had never been

seriously spoken of as the admirer of any woman, and his already considerable claims to female admiration had gradually been enhanced by that of reputed indifference, even invulnerability.

But in truth Ruthven Ramsay was neither invulnerable nor indifferent; he was only scrupulously honourable, and excessively fastidious. No fortune with which a woman could be dowered would have induced him to marry her without love; but, on the other hand, no love that a woman could inspire would have induced him to accept all from her. So that he had come to regard himself as an "outsider"—one to whom the prize matrimonial was never to be adjudged.

That very refinement of taste, manners, and habits, without which no woman could inspire him with love, rendered it improbable that he should find the one woman whom he must love, outside the rank and condition of life in which wealth is as general as it is indispensable; yet, he had not hitherto been obliged to fly from an agonising temptation, or induced to fail in his allegiance to his immutable code of honour. He had not seen the woman whom he could have loved, had

she been ever so romantically and accommodatingly poor; and he was beginning to think his lot might not be so hard a one after all. When Ruthven Ramsay, part of whose regiment was quartered in Cornwall, entered the ball-room at Tredethlyn Castle he was heart-whole and fancy free.

Gemma had said truly that he was the handsomest man in the room. It almost always befell Ruthven Ramsay to be so, and to produce such an effect by his presence, that people in general were much surprised to find he had anything beyond his good looks to recommend him. Lady novelists had not yet made masculine ugliness heroic, but there already existed a notion that male beauty and boobyism usually went together. He was not remarkably tall, but his figure combined strength and symmetry, and his face, with its dark-blue eyes, features fine and delicate, but peculiarly instinct with manliness; his noble head, with its closely-curling masses of auburn-brown hair, were of typical beauty.

He had been some time in the ball-room before he attempted to penetrate the crowd surrounding Miss Tredethlyn, but he waited patiently his turn for an introduction, looking

about him in the meanwhile, and admiring the pretty, fresh complexions and animated manners of many a belle of the Duchy, to whom "the season" was utterly unknown, and the possibility of ever getting enough of balls was incredible. Thus, amid the shifting of the crowd, he caught occasional glimpses of a face so beautiful, so bright, so full of youthful pleasure, and yet of delicate and refined sensibility—with eyes dark, proud, brilliant, and yet tender—a face in which intellect, feeling, cultivation, race, had cunningly blended their expression into loveliness such as he had never before seen. People came and went, intervening between him and the figure, girlish indeed, but stately and statuesque, at which he earnestly gazed. She only did not change her place, and presently, a gap occurring in the crowd, Ruthven Ramsay, with his sponsor, a Cornish squire, by his side, took advantage of it to be introduced to Miss Tredethlyn.

"Now we shall have a look at the wonderful necklace Lady Merthyr has been talking about," said Sir Merthyr Merthyr. But Ruthven Ramsay made his bow to Miss Tredethlyn, asked for a dance, and fell back into the crowd, with only the vaguest notion of what Miss Tredethlyn was like, and without having seen the wonderful

necklace. He had been looking at Gemma di Valdimonte's sparkling eyes.

Blanche Tredethlyn's eighteenth birthday formed an epoch in her life in more than the conventional sense. The first of the guests at the ball who presented himself afterwards at the castle was Ruthven Ramsay, and she heard his name announced with a feeling hitherto unknown, as though something extraordinary had occurred to her.

There is no need to elaborate this portion of Blanche Tredethlyn's history—it was only the old, old story, after all.

Tredethlyn Castle was always picturesque and beautiful, but it was peculiarly so in the glorious summer weather which set in after Blanche's birthday festival, when sunshine was upon sea and shore, upon ivy-grown turret and smooth bowling-green, upon pleached alleys, and smiling, many-coloured gardens. That was to Blanche Tredethlyn an enchanted time, and not to her alone. Captain Ruthven Ramsay and his friends were still in the vicinity; but he had forsaken the inn, and was staying at Merthyr with his sponsorial friend. Day after day found the young officer, to whom Sir Bernard had taken a decided liking, at the

castle, in pleasant, idle attendance upon the ladies. The first distinct idea concerning Miss Tredethlyn that Ruthven Ramsay was conscious of entertaining, was that she was vastly inferior to the peerless Gemma ; and although on better acquaintance with her, he did justice to the young lady's gifts of intellect and disposition, it never occurred to him to think of her in any light but that of Gemma's friend, who might, perhaps, be induced to be his friend also. After she had given him her whole heart, when every wish and fancy of hers were centred in him, although she had no real knowledge of how entirely she loved him, Ruthven Ramsay could not have told the colour of Miss Tredethlyn's eyes, or remembered how she wore her hair.

Captain Ramsay learned very quickly all about the beautiful girl who first made him feel how difficult it would be to adhere to his rule with regard to women. This portionless, high-born lady was not to be thought of as possibly his wife ; he could have no right to try and win one who had such a future before her, such sovereign right as hers to all that some happier man than he could give. But it was not easy to refrain from thinking of Gemma, and Captain Ramsay speedily left off trying to refrain. He saw

her frequently ; the old-world courtesy and hospitality of Sir Bernard afforded him all the opportunities that the most ardent admirer, if he had any claim to keep within the bounds of reason, could desire. He had leave from his regiment for some weeks, and there was no equivocal warmth or eagerness in the reception he met with almost daily from the young ladies at the castle. If Blanche had had a mother to watch over her with the vigilance of love, or even an hired chaperon to surround her with the precautions of interest, the disaster of an unrequited attachment could hardly have befallen the young lady of Tredethlyn.

In about three weeks after the birthday festival, and when the early summer was exquisitely beautiful, the painting which Sir Bernard had purchased from Gemma's father reached Tredethlyn, and was hung in the picture-gallery. Miss Tredethlyn and her friend had been out, passing the sunny hours upon the shore, and there Sir Merthyr Merthyr with his wife, and Captain Ruthven Ramsay, joined them. Until this day Blanche had not taken herself to task for the feelings which she neither attempted to define nor to govern. But now, as she walked towards her stately home, with Ruthven at her

side, his dark-blue eyes bent upon her with even more than their usual gentleness, his manner full of the high-bred deference which is so charming to women, his voice modulated to tones in which dwelt all music to the young girl's ears, she did not palter with or deceive herself any longer. She loved him, and her dearest hope, her delicious, timid belief, was that he loved her. She was so exquisitely happy! Surely the world must be a good and glorious place, and human life a splendid, an inestimable boon, when such a being as Ruthven lived in the one, and such feelings as hers were permitted to irradiate the other! So absorbed was she that she hardly noticed the preoccupation of Gemma, and felt like one awakened from a dream—scarcely able to recognise surrounding objects—when her friend said to her:

“Blanche, you have been very good to wait so patiently, and to ask me no questions. But you are now to be rewarded. I am going to tell you the grand secret.”

“Grand secret!” said Blanche, blushing, “I don't think I know what you mean.”

“Oh, then you've forgotten! And you don't care to know where I saw a jewel like your ruby heart?”

"Of course—I remember, and I do care to know—only—only I seem to have so much more to think of now, that things escape me somehow."

"Never mind. You shall hear the secret all the same as though you had been trying to find it out; but only on one condition—you must wear the ruby heart at dinner."

"When there's so small a party, Gemma?"

"Yes—never mind the smallness of the party; everybody there will think anything you do is right, you know. Stay—you are nearly dressed—I will put it on your neck now."

The gem touched Blanche's soft warm neck coldly, and she started slightly under Gemma's hands.

After dinner Sir Bernard proposed a general adjournment to the picture-gallery, in order that his guests might inspect his latest acquisition.

The admiring group was gathered round the painting when Gemma came to Blanche's side and pressed her arm.

"Now for the secret," she whispered. "Look to the right of the picture, at the figure of the Dauphin."

"Yes, I am looking."

"Now look to the left, at the figure of the Queen of Scots,"

"Yes, I am looking."

"Do you see any similarity in their ornaments? Here is a magnifying glass—observe the white satin shoulder-knot worn by each as a bridal favour. What is the jewel in the centre?"

Blanche looked intently, and then the arm which held the glass dropped at her side, and she turned a pale face on the smiling Gemma, as she answered:

"It is a ruby heart with a pearl."

CHAPTER VI.

"THE FATAL JEWEL"

WHEN Blanche Tredethlyn was alone that night, she sat gazing on the necklace with a strange terror and attraction.

"It is no guess," she thought. "It is no mere coincidence. Something has told my spirit that this is the jewel the Queen wore, the fatal Queen, who brought evil to every one by her presence, and who seems to live still, centuries after her death—the most real being in all the history of the past to me, the being whose true story I have most longed and tried to penetrate. If you could speak"—her thoughts were now softly murmured in words—"you cold, bright, senseless, beautiful thing—what stories you could tell, if indeed you adorned Queen Mary at her bridal, and rested on her breast. Strange stories of a terrible time, when for many

a one the upper earth was as perilous and fearful as those depths of the sea, whence you come hither. What did you see there—in the tremendous caverns where the dead rest not, men say, but are for ever swayed in the great rolling waters? If you could tell me your story, could I bear to hear it? Should I not have a great fear of you, atom as you are of the earth's hidden treasure; wrought relic of human love and suffering; waif of the dreadful ocean? Yes, I should fear you—nay, more, I fear you now.”

“Gemma,” said Blanche to her friend, when they met next morning, “I would rather you did not say anything to either papa or Mr. Vaughan about the likeness of my ruby heart to the jewel in the picture. I know it is weak of me, and worse than weak, superstitious; but I would rather no one knew about this likeness except ourselves.”

“And yet it would give fresh interest and increased value to both the picture and the jewel.”

“I know; but I have a strong feeling in this matter, and you won't cross me in it, will you?”

“No, indeed, I will not,” said Gemma, and

she kept her promise, not even talking of the coincidence to Captain Ruthven Ramsay.

Mr. Maldon found Blanche Tredethlyn intelligent and interested on the subject of her Irish property. She now had a dear untold reason for prizing highly the wealth which she should have the power of conferring on another. The bright weeks of the summer flitted by, and the light cloud that rested from time to time on Miss Tredethlyn's thoughtful, placid face, came there more frequently, and remained longer. Her father saw it, Gemma saw it; of those who were much with her Ruthven Ramsay only did not see it. But he was unobservant of every one except Gemma—an example of the reflected egotism of love. To all attempts to discover the origin of this fitful sadness Blanche opposed a gentle, steadfast denial of its existence. When her father questioned her, she would remind him that she was growing older, was a responsible person, and must be steady, or she would put him off with a jesting reply. When Gemma questioned her, she would sigh, look wistfully at her, and say that she was not sad, there was nothing the matter with her, that, in fact, no one could be happier than she. Gemma grew uneasy about her friend; finding it vain to

question Blanche, she confided her anxiety to Mr. Vaughan, who, in his turn, observed Blanche closely. As an outsider in every game of active life, as a looker-on at every scene of human passion, the old priest was more clear-sighted than any there, and he readily made up his mind as to why Blanche's spirits were changing painfully from the placid cheerfulness that had characterised her. But Blanche, much as she liked and esteemed him, clearly as she perceived the greater sympathy of his mind with hers than that of any other of her associates, even Gemma, was entirely reticent towards Mr. Vaughan, nor could any effort on his part tempt her from her reserve. Their young lady's changed looks, and silent, melancholy ways, soon became the talk of the servants, and even of the tenants about Tredethlyn. Some declared that she looked like a ghost, while others said for certain she had seen one.

This was true; Blanche had seen the uncanniest ghost which youth can see—the phantom of an unreal, impossible, deceptive hope. There is no more blighting vision. The young girl bore bravely first the dawning, and then the full, blinding, confirmatory light of the truth. Her dream of happiness did not last for many

weeks, and it was dispelled by Captain Ramsay himself. One evening when she was singing, as she always sang, with exquisite taste and feeling, and he was standing at a little distance, she noticed the changes in the expression of his face, as the soft, passionate words of the song flowed over her lips, and she saw, instantly, that those looks were not directed to her. Gemma was near her, leaning on the back of a high velvet chair, over which her arm was stretched, the hand touching Miss Tredethlyn's shoulder. It was Gemma's eyes that Ramsay were seeking, it was in Gemma's face he was looking for the sentiment of the song. With the notes still thrilling from her parted lips, Blanche turned her head and caught the answering glance. It told her all, and the stroke of a dagger in her heart could hardly have been keener, while it would certainly have been more merciful, pain. But Blanche was true to her race; she carried the heart of a hero in that slender body of hers. Her manner was as gracious, her smile was as sweet, during the remainder of that evening as before, but Gemma remarked something strange in her voice. Blanche imputed it to fatigue; the sun had affected her, she should be quite well after a good night's rest. And when

Gemma went to her room to take leave of her for the night, Blanche kissed her with more than her usual earnestness and affection, but acknowledged that she was unable to talk any more. For three days after this Miss Tredethlyn kept her room, a bad cold was the assigned reason; and when she again appeared among the party assembled at the castle, her altered looks confirmed the statement.

From that time the change which Sir Bernard and Gemma noted with anxiety, became apparent in Blanche, and from that time also Captain Ruthven Ramsay began to have a truer, higher, more generous appreciation of her. No human eye beheld, no human heart sympathised with, the girl's struggle; there was none to rejoice in her victory. She accepted her lot with entire submission, and accused only herself of the anguish it implied. She had given her heart to Ruthven Ramsay unasked—she loved a man who loved another; but while she fully acknowledged in this conviction the extinction of the brightest hope which can illumine a woman's life, she nobly kept fresh in her remembrance the charms, the graces, the undeniable claims to admiration of her beautiful and gifted friend. Blanche's pale face grew

paler, her gentle voice more low, her quiet step more subdued as the weeks went on, and every day confirmed the revelation that had been made to her by Ruthven Ramsay's face.

It was arranged that, in the following spring Sir Bernard and his daughter should go to Ireland, and take up their abode in the town nearest to Kilferran Abbey, from thence to inspect the progress of the new mansion and make themselves acquainted with the estate. Miss Tredethlyn, while acknowledging that she was not quite strong, did not in the meantime wish for any change of residence. She had had too much travelling, she said, and she wanted quiet; nothing that would break up their life at home would be welcome to her.

Day by day Blanche waited in expectation of the coming of the great trial which she felt was in store for her—Gemma's confidence on the subject of her happy love. No pang of envy of her beautiful friend had ever been caused by Gemma's loveliness—she had regarded beauty as a thing apart, even as a monarch's crown might be; and she strove to feel no envy now, but strove in vain. "She has everything," thought Blanche. "Beauty, fascination, and *his* love—and I, what have I?" To look around

on all the wealth and luxury of which she was mistress did not supply her with an answer; these did not mean much to her, and she was too ignorant of the world's judgments to know how much they might mean in the estimation of that world.

But the confidence she dreaded did not come from Gemma. It came in a form harder to bear than any she had feared. It came from Ruthven Ramsay himself. It came in the form of a petition for her influence and her aid. Gemma had owned that she loved him, but had refused to marry him for his own sake—refused to come to him, a portionless wife, as she must come—refused thus to traverse his prospects in life, and she had bidden him to leave her.

Blanche bore her sharp trial nobly. She cheered Captain Ramsay with assurances that Gemma's nature was as constant as it was loving, and that if he had but courage and perseverance to pursue fortune, he might return and find her still there and faithful to her love. She urged upon him that Gemma was acting consistently with her duty; she spoke modestly of interest which Sir Bernard might use in high places to procure for Captain Ramsay swift

advancement. His plan was to go to India, where at that time the best prizes of the soldier were to be won, to win some of those prizes, and to come back and claim his bride—a programme which had a far different and more terrible meaning in those days than a similar one would have now. Blanche approved his design, telling him she would guard Gemma for him, and that when he returned, he was to come and ask her for the treasure he had left in her care. She found relief and strength in the earnestness of her intention and the eagerness of her promise. The single-hearted fervour of her regard for the two, who little suspected what their mutual love cost her, supported her. In her presence Gemma promised her lover to wait for him, no matter how long, and they exchanged rings in the foreign style of betrothal.

"And I shall find you here?" Ruthven Ramsay said to Gemma.

"If Tredethlyn is still my home, you will find her," Blanche answered for her; "but, if not, wherever my home is, there Gemma will be. She has no near relatives to dispute that point with me."

Ruthven Ramsay went away from Tredethlyn, and Blanche knew that with him all the glory

had gone out of her life ; but love and duty were still left in it, and she was resolved to be faithful to both. The touch of this great sorrow, always to be borne in absolute solitude, ennobled her, and soon gave a new refinement and dignity to her face.

No lady of Tredethlyn had ever been more popular or more beloved than Sir Bernard's daughter ; but, as time went on, it began to be whispered about among the people that Miss Tredethlyn was "strange ;" that she never intended to marry ; that she had refused "the best blood in Cornwall" ; that if Sir Bernard were dead she would go into a convent, as her great-aunt, Marcia Tredethlyn, had done ; finally, that she had an awful knowledge of the spirit-world, and had even seen the ghost who had long ago looked into the Venice mirror. But people did not believe this, for Miss Tredethlyn continued to live at the castle, and if she had seen that ghost she would have been frightened away. She came back to Tredethlyn from Ireland ; she did not go abroad with Sir Bernard and Mr. Vaughan when they again visited the Continent ; she seemed fonder of the place than ever. It was then impossible she should be "haunted." But Mother Skirrow, who

was reputed very wise in such matters, looked mysterious, and said, oracularly, unmoved by these arguments: "It isn't as *she* likes. Those that the spirits come to must do what the spirits bid. Mayhap she's held here by her dreams."

CHAPTER VII.

KILFERRAN

* * * * *

THE moon was shining brightly over the ruins of Kilferran Abbey, and Blanche Tredethlyn, looking out of the window of her own room, in the new house she had built, felt that she had never before appreciated the beauty of the scene thoroughly. The solemnity of a great change had fallen upon Blanche. Tredethlyn Castle was no longer hers. Sir Bernard died a little before the completion of the building of Blanche's house at Kilferran, and the present owner of Tredethlyn had shut up the castle. He had indeed placed it at Blanche's disposal for an unlimited time, but she preferred to take up her abode at Kilferran, so soon as the new house could be put in order; and she, Gemma, and Mr. Vaughan, now a very old man, had just

arrived there. The loneliness of the place, the strangeness of the life, had a charm for Blanche in her sorrow, and the slight figure of the young mistress of Kilferran, in her mourning dress, offered no discordant contrast to the general aspect of the scene.

Since those sunny summer days at Tredethlyn, a strange alteration had come over Blanche, which made of her a being lonely and apart. It was not her ill-fated love; she had accepted that in a spirit so humble, so loyal, and so frank, that it had no power to embitter her. Neither was it her grief for her father; for this, deep and sincere as it was, and full of the aching void of loneliness, was not of a rebellious and resentful kind. The change had another origin, and not even Gemma had been able to discover it. Blanche's smile still had its familiar sweetness, there was the same musical ring in her low voice; but there was a far-away look in her eyes, and she sometimes spoke and moved like one in a dream. Active in the discharge of every duty, and scrupulously careful for the comfort of every one around her, Miss Tredethlyn was not *of* the world she was *in*. As she had lived of late among the people at Tredethlyn, so she lived among the

fewer and ruder people at her new home—kind, distant, different, alone.

Blanche stood by the window, which opened down to the floor; the moonlight shone on her face, thinner, more transparent, far less plain than it formerly was; it touched the lines of her figure, clothed in a loose black dress, and the long tresses of her fair hair, pushed back from her face, and falling over her shoulders. Behind her was the luxurious, brightly-lighted, flower-scented room, a picture of modern life and comfort; before her, the new, incomplete-looking flower-garden, and a young plantation; then a stretch of green sward, the abrupt rise of a steep hill, and the old, old Abbey, ghastly, but yet beautiful, in the moonlight.

“My dreams,” she murmured, “oh, my dreams! Shall I ever find their interpretation? They crowd about me here, more than in my old home; my life is theirs, the hours in which I am not dreaming hardly count. Whence do they come? and why? and why more and more constantly? It must be because I so cherish and love them. I turn from the brightest day to the night which brings them to me—from the company of my friends to the silent communion with these shades. How Gemma and

Mr. Vaughan watch me! I know they are looking for the fancied traces of some mortal disease; I know they think I am not to live long—many of the Tredethlyns have died young, I believe; but I feel no illness, no pain, and if I do feel weariness, it is that which comes of pain that is past, as mine is. Yes, past, quite past, gone for ever. I loved him with all my fancy, not with all my heart, surely not according to the passion called love, or I could not have forgiven—not him, but myself;—I could not now think of his return and of their marriage with more than composure, with cheerful hope and pleasure. But I do not suffer now; it is all gone; my dreams are here instead, and they never bring me any pain. Perhaps they leave a mark upon me—when I come back from them to the life that is not life—a mark which people see, and cannot understand, and therefore, they watch me. Well, let them. I would tell what my dreams are, but that they might leave me, like the fairies I used to believe in when I was a child, who would never appear twice to any mortal who had told of the mysterious grace done him by the ‘good people.’ They, too, might vanish and leave me more than ever lonely. No, no,” Blanche murmured, as she

slightly waved her hand towards the ruin, as though bidding it adieu, and dropped the curtain before the balconied window, "I cannot tell any one my dreams."

Blanche retired to rest, and soon the moonbeams, peeping through chinks in the curtains, glimmered on her sleeping face. One white, slender hand lay softly on the counterpane by her side, but the other, hidden in the lace at the bosom of her nightdress, closed over the mysterious and precious jewel which she always wore. By day and night, the ruby heart with the tear of pearl rested ever in the girl's bosom; the constant, inseparable companion of Blanche Trédethlyn's life.

Gemma di Valdimonte was beautiful and charming as ever, and very popular in the new home to which she had accompanied her friend. She was happy though her lover was absent. No jealous fears, no unworthy doubts disturbed her, and even natural anxiety on his behalf, while it made the feelings with which she regarded him solemn, did not distract her or render her restless. Ruthven Ramsay would do his duty, she knew right well, and if distinction were to be earned, he would surely earn it. All his letters were confirmatory of this faith; all

breathed hope, love, and assurance, and Gemma was happy. The people about Kilferran, with the quick sympathy of their race, and the appreciation of beauty and grace also natural to them, regarded Gemma with peculiar favour. They had found out that she came of good blood, that her family was noble, and had suffered much; this discovery increased her importance in the estimation of people who held the old names of their own land—all associated with misery and oppression—in undying reverence.

Ruthven Ramsay was beginning to talk of coming to England. The last of England's enemies in Hindostan were conquered — of course for ever — his promotion had been satisfactory, and his prospects in the service were very good. Such was the state of affairs, when on one autumn day, when the leaves were falling, and the winds were sighing softly around the ruined walls of Kilferran, as a prelude to their winter wailing, Ruthven Ramsay's last letter formed the subject of discussion between Blanche and Gemma.

The girls, accompanied by Mr. Vaughan, had been out for some hours watching the progress of the workmen engaged in converting the land

immediately about the new house into ornamental grounds. They were pressing on the operations, so as to forestall the severe weather, and in particular the draining of a small but deep pond; an unsightly object, useless for the purposes of the new house. Blanche had come in tired, and was lying on a couch, placed close to her favourite window, while Gemma sat by her side. In Gemma's hand was Ramsay's letter.

"After all, what he tells me does not make things right," said Gemma—"he will still be marrying a poor girl, and I shall be snubbed by his people, I suppose."

"No, no," said Blanche, "they could never do that, I am sure; and Colonel Ramsay will not give them the chance if they were inclined. Besides, Gemma, darling—though—though you may not be what people call rich—English people have such extravagant notions of the money one needs to be happy in this world—you will not be poor either, not quite portionless, you know."

Blanche spoke hesitatingly, and took Gemma's disengaged hand. Gemma lifted up her head and looked at her.

"You mean that you will *dôter* me. No,

Blanche, this must not be. Ruthven and I knew you had this intention; but we are of one mind about that. It must not and it shall not be!"

"And why not, Gemma? Why am I not to do what I like with my own—with the money which my dear father left me, to dispose of at my free will?"

"Because it would be wrong; because it would be mean and unworthy of Ruthven and of me. You have been my best friend, dearest Blanche. Think of the comfortless, uncongenial, grudging home you took me from. What sort of home it was, and how welcome I was there is plain, I think, considering that my uncle has never asked me to return, or cared that I was living all this time upon your bounty. Think of the home you have given me ever since, and——"

"Gemma," interrupted Blanche, "you are arguing for, not against me. It is because you have no real home but this, because we are sisters in all things, because our life is one, that I have a right to expect you will let me do as I propose. My darling, what is it all worth to me apart from you?"

"Now, I know that is so," said Gemma.

"but it will not always be so. The time must come for me to leave you, and follow Ruthven's fortunes, and before that time, I trust, a similar hope, brighter in one sense—it could not be brighter in another—will have come to you. You will marry, Blanche, and then—then—you will know that, in common honour and honesty, we could not let you give us money which ought to be your husband's. Don't you see this, dearest Blanche? Ruthven has said it all to me, and I knew the time would come when I should have to say it to you."

Gemma was now kneeling by her friend's couch, and her arms were clasped round Blanche's slender form. As she spoke of the probability that Blanche would marry, a tinge of colour had suffused the pale face into which she was looking; but it passed quickly as Blanche replied with a smile:

"I shall never marry, Gemma; be quite sure of that. I shall wrong no possible husband, no future children, by what I intend to do."

"Never marry?—and why?"

"Because it is not my vocation, not my destiny. I think mine is the best and happiest

of any." Here she paused, and drew Gemma, whose southern blood was chilled by something in her face, closer to her. "Gemma, darling, you do not know that *I have heard Cyprian's bells.*"

At that moment the sound of many eager, shouting voices, and the tread of hurrying feet underneath the window, came suddenly into the room. Blanche and Gemma started up and ran to the window. A number of workmen—among whom they recognised Mr. Vaughan, and saw a large, dark object carried by two men—were turning the angle of the house. The girls hurried to the chief entrance, and, almost so soon as they reached it, the men approached.

"What is the matter? Has anything happened?" asked Blanche.

"Nothing is the matter," replied Mr. Vaughan; "but a very extraordinary discovery has been made."

He directed the men to advance to the door, and they laid down at Miss Tredethlyn's feet a heavy, strangely-shaped object, blackened, rusted, defaced by time, but bearing some resemblance to a monstrous bird, with beak and claws and outstretched wings. The girls looked

at it wondering, and the men stood around, wondering also, to hear Mr. Vaughan's explanation.

"When they had emptied the pond in the place known as the Friar's Garden, the workmen found at the bottom a quantity of rubbish and heavy stones. They began to remove these and came upon this strange object beneath. I believe they at first tried to knock it to pieces with their pickaxes; but one of them brought me to the spot where it lay, a mere blackened monstrous-looking lump of metal. I recognised it, as a lectern of ancient form and fabric; and I have no doubt it is one which belonged to the old Abbey in the time of the Dominican Friars, and was flung into the pond when the Abbey was dismantled by Sydney's troops. If this be true, you are to be congratulated on the discovery of so valuable and interesting an object of antiquity on your estate."

Blanche and Gemma were stooping over the huge mass, eyeing it with curiosity, while Mr. Vaughan spoke; but the men looked askance, and one of the foremost whispered to his neighbour:

"Valuable is it? Arrah! sure it's only a lump of ould iron."

"The Tredethlyn tradition is destined to follow you, it seems," said Mr. Vaughan; "the relics of the past turn up wherever a Tredethlyn has a house."

The strange-looking object, having been cleaned so far as it was possible, was carried into the house, the men were rewarded, and Miss Tredethlyn, Gemma, and Mr. Vaughan were left to examine the ancient lectern. The battered and blackened surface proved, after much rubbing and oiling, to be finely-wrought brass, and the ruby eyes were still perfect. The girls watched the process of cleaning the lectern with much interest, speculating upon its age, upon how it came into the place where it had been found, upon the dead-and-gone monks who, reverently standing before it, had read the sacred *Evangelists*; upon the closed ears which had heard, within yonder ruins, the awful words of counsel, command, and consolation. Blanche was animated and excited; Gemma declared she had not seen her so much so since the day she had been given the ruby heart, "that happy day when I first saw Ruthven," she whispered. The services of a competent person were procured to restore the lectern so far as possible, and by degrees the artistic beauty of the design

and finish of the workmanship became apparent. When the restorer's task was complete, Mr. Vaughan examined the fine brazen plates representing the feathers on the eagle's breast, and raising with a chisel one of these which had been bent and beaten, revealed an orifice, dexterously stopped with an iron plug. Blanche only was with him when he made this discovery, and they wondered what the meaning of the hole, which had evidently been carefully made, and as carefully stopped, could be.

"Perhaps there is something in the lectern," said Blanche at length; "and this may be a keyhole."

"I think you are right," replied Mr. Vaughan; "the body of the bird may be a receptacle for something — papers, perhaps. How strange if we should find anything of the kind, though they would probably be illegible."

"Perhaps not," said Blanche. "If water has never got inside the lectern. But there was no sound when it was moved."

"No; but the plate was down then. Put your ear to it—your hearing is so keen—while I shake it."

Mr. Vaughan shook the brazen bird while Blanche listened. But she heard nothing. He shook it once more, and she again listened. "Yes, yes, there's a sound—a faint sound—very far down. I can just catch it; but it is there—it is, indeed."

"Then we will try and find out what causes it," said Mr. Vaughan; "there's something that will get the plug out among my tools."

"Oh!" said Blanche, detaining him for a moment, "it makes me feel so strange—it is almost like opening a coffin."

"We may find a relic there," said Mr. Vaughan. "I should not wonder if the friars hid something of great price in so secure and ingenious a hiding-place when the troubles came upon them, and they were driven out."

"Let me call Gemma."

"Call no one, Blanche, until we see what this is. Let none but you and me know anything about it."

Miss Tredethlyn watched Mr. Vaughan with breathless interest as he plied his chisel so as to raise two more of the brazen plates below the plugged orifice. He made way but slowly, and was saying he feared he must

have the assistance of a smith, when the point of the instrument he was using was caught in an imperceptible groove, and slid in a straight line from left to right. It had evidently touched a spring or hinge, for a plate, six inches in length, fell open, disclosing the interior of the eagle's breast, formed of metal of surprising thickness. Mr. Vaughan plunged his hand into the opening, dragged out with difficulty, so closely was it stowed away, a large packet covered with some woollen substance, and disclosed a roll of tin or lead. This again contained a roll of ancient, discoloured parchment. Mr. Vaughan smoothed out the roll and found that it consisted of several skins, closely written over in the quaint character of three hundred years ago, but with the care, distinctness, and evenness of the monastic writing of that and earlier periods. He laid the scroll aside, and, putting his arm down into the open space, searched every corner of it carefully, but there was nothing more.

"What are they?" asked Blanche, looking at the parchment scrolls with the awe and reverence inseparable in imaginative and refined minds, from any object of antiquity which records the lives and experiences of human

beings, long ago passed into the unknown world. She touched the woollen stuff which the packet had been wrapped in, wondering whose were the fingers that had touched it last. Were they numbered among the bones which had recently been reverently reburied, when the earth about the Abbey was turned up, or were they merely dust in the undisturbed graves within the ruin ?

“Mr. Vaughan, what are the papers?”

“I cannot tell yet. It will take me a long time to decipher them, although they are uninjured ; for the writing is difficult, and the language, too ; it is old French. If, as it seems likely, these papers throw a light upon the past history of the Abbey, our discovery will be valuable indeed.”

CHAPTER VIII.

CYPRIAN'S TRUST

AT Mr. Vaughan's request Miss Tredethlyn left him to pursue his task alone. While she remained away from the scene of his labours, her thoughts dwelt upon them unremittingly, and her fancy wove a thousand romances of the long-extinct life, that had once animated the scene she loved. But no effort of her imagination had prepared her for the communication that Mr. Vaughan made when he summoned her to his presence late on that same night.

She found Mr. Vaughan standing before a table on which the parchment scrolls were laid out, together with several loose sheets of paper, covered with notes in his own handwriting. Strong emotion was visible in the old man's face as he advanced towards her.

"Blanche," he said, "we have found a treasure!"

"The history of the Abbey?"

"No, a real treasure in gold and jewels, and also a record of deeply romantic interest—a record, too, interwoven with the story of your own old home in an extraordinary way. Don't look frightened, there is nothing to fear, though much to be surprised at. Take my place here, while I tell you the strange story revealed by these documents."

Blanche obeyed him in silence.

"Look at this skin of parchment," he continued; "it is the preamble to the narrative, and it sets forth how, by command of the Prior of Kilferran, a monk of the order of St. Dominic did, in the year of grace 1569, put in writing certain things that had befallen some months previously, and his own personal concern with them, in order that a sacred trust undertaken by him might be fulfilled in the event of his death, and certain jewels of price be preserved for their rightful owners. You are following me, Blanche?"

"Yes, yes, every word. How wonderful, how awful it seems!"

"Wonderful indeed. Only himself and the

Prior, says the writer, are in possession of this knowledge, and he places it on record so that it may, at their respective deaths, pass into the keeping of some one in the usual, thereby charged solemnly with the fulfilment of the trust, if called upon for such fulfilment, and if not, with the maintenance of the secret, and its due transmission in an herein-appointed order. Then comes the narrative." Mr. Vaughan paused.

"Go on, go on," said Blanche. "I am not frightened; but it is like hearing the dead speak, like seeing the dead move, that, after centuries, this man's story should be told by himself to us."

"The monk, Brother Cyprian, of the order of Friars Preachers——"

"Cyprian!" exclaimed Blanche. "The donor of the bells the people talk of yet! Cyprian's bells, which some hear still, which I have heard many a time. Yes, I have heard them; don't smile at me; go on, go on."

"No doubt this Brother Cyprian is the same—it was in the great troubles, they say, that the bells were taken from Kilferran. He tells how he had been known in the world as François, Comte de Valmont, and how he had

a younger brother, the Chevalier de Valmont, whose name was Louis."

"De Valmont," cried Blanche, "De Valmont—it is Gemma's name!"

"Yes—it is Gemma's name, and I have no doubt this document is the solution of a part of the strange story which Gemma told me when she came to Tredethlyn—and that Tredethlyn itself has supplied the solution of the remainder. But for the present you must listen to the story of the brothers."

While the darkness waned, and the dawn broke over the ruined walls of Kilferran, Blanche listened to the solemn statement, written by Brother Cyprian more than two centuries and a half before—within the same walls whose skeleton now stood bare and ghastly in the coming light—the story of his brother's gallant, loyal, fruitless enterprise. She listened with almost appalled attention, motionless, and with clasped hands. The statement ended thus:

"Forasmuch as I know not if my brother be laid in prison, or be slain of his enemies, or be lost in shipwreck; and have no certitude at all whether he lives or is dead; but am, nevertheless, persuaded that he is dead, though without proof of the same, I will and prescribe that the

Trust which I have held shall be delivered to whomsoever shall demand it in the name of the Queen of Scots, and by showing of her Grace's Token ; without the showing of which, the form whereof is known to the Father Prior, the Trust shall not be delivered. The place wherein the Trust committed to me by my brother is laid is known only to the Father Prior and to myself, and shall be divulged by the survivor of us two to one individual, who shall be bound, in the like manner as we are, to the fulfilment of the Trust, and shall in his turn divulge it, under seal of secrecy, to another ; so that in time to come, the purpose of the Trust may be fulfilled ; but never otherwise than on the showing of the Token."

"And now," said Mr. Vaughan, after he had read the above passage from his translation of the scroll, "now comes the final disposition of the Trust, made by this monk, in the belief that his brother was dead, and therefore that he had become his heir—also, no doubt, with the desire to secure the treasure to the Community, in the event of the fulfilment of his brother's purpose having become impossible, for he did not foresee the ruin and dispersion of his brethren. He declares that after all possibility of its appli-

cation to the original purpose of the Trust shall have ceased to exist, the Treasure is to become the property of the owner or owners of Kilferran."

"I wonder what became of it," said Blanche, speaking for the first time.

"I believe that it has never been found. I believe that in the secret hiding-place, in which this monk and the Prior placed it, the Treasure of the De Valmonts lies undisturbed, and if I am right, Blanche, that Treasure is yours."

"Mine!" she exclaimed, "mine!"

"Yes, yours! You are the owner of Kilferran, you are the dweller here."

"I am bewildered," said Blanche. "I can hardly follow your argument. Where was the treasure hidden? What became of Louis de Valmont? He was never heard of in France, according to the record in Gemma's family."

"True, he never was heard of again; but I think I know what became of him, and also where the Treasure he deposited with his brother is."

Mr. Vaughan took up a smaller piece of parchment, with writing on it in a different hand, and in the English language.

"This," said he, "is a memorandum by the Prior of whom the monk speaks, and in it he states that, trouble having come upon the Community, he is about to place Brother Cyprian's record in a safe place, where it will incur no risk of being discovered, until such time as it may be permitted to him to return to Kilferran, or, in the event of his not returning, until the person on whom the Trust will then devolve shall come back to execute it. And the Prior adds: 'Seeing that we are in such straits that a swift destruction may at any hour come upon us, and lest it should befall that I could do no more than tell one trusty person where this document may be found, I write herein, for the instruction of the person to be intrusted, that the Token whereof our Brother Cyprian, now departed, makes mention as the Secret Token whereby the Queen of Scots, or her representative, shall alone make claim to the Trust, is a great balas-ruby, shaped in the form of a heart, and laid with one pearl. The which jewel was given by the Queen of Scots to the said Louis de Valmont, and is without peer, save that other balas-ruby of a like device which was brought hither by

the said Brother Cyprian, and by him offered *ex voto*. Concerning which latter jewel, I have seen fit, as the times are troublous, and the Community may be in straits, to place it, together with the aforesaid Trust, in the secure hiding-place herein described, so that, seeing it is not consecrate, nor hath at any time been used in the service of the altar, it may, if need arise, lawfully be sold or put to surety for the profit of the Community.'"

"Blanche," said Mr. Vaughan to the girl, who had sat stricken with amazement, during the reading of this document, "your ruby heart is the Queen's Token!"

Blanche laid her hand upon the jewel, and sank back in her chair, quite weak and white. The lights in the room were fading in the beams of the morning sun, but the old man and the girl did not perceive that the day had come upon them.

"It must be so—it must be so," Blanche said faintly. "The jewels in the picture of the Queen's marriage, did you never notice them? I did not tell you of them, but Gemma and I recognised them—and I have never doubted that my ruby heart was once worn by Queen Mary; and oh, how I value and love it, for

that conviction. But—but how did it come to Tredethlyn?"

"You remember your father's account of it, Blanche. There is no doubt that Louis de Valmont was lost at sea: that it was from the wreck of the ship on which he sailed that the coffers and the lamp were taken long, long afterwards; that these things were destined for the use of the rescued Queen. The coffers no doubt contained rich garments. The ruby heart was cast upon the Cornish coast, and came into your father's hands. There is a strange destiny in all this, my child. The Treasure is yours, as, by an extraordinary coincidence, the Token, which would once have claimed it, is yours also;—if, as I have very little doubt, the precious deposit remains where the Prior placed it. But see, it is broad day, and you are weary; indeed, I too begin to feel tired. Go and rest, and I will do the same; to-morrow we will puzzle out the secret of the hiding-place together. Meanwhile not a word of this to any one."

Blanche went to her room; she was bewildered, almost stunned by the emotion she had gone through. She lay down upon her bed, but the house was stirring long before sleep came to her.

"This is what my dreams meant," she thought, as she lay with her hand upon the ruby heart; "this is why my sleep has been peopled with beautiful phantoms. Were they ghosts, those brave and gallant men, those fair women, who have kept me company in my dreams, and made my life twofold? Was this the message the phantoms had for me? *Mine*, the treasure *mine*! Yes, by this Token, and for the fulfilment of Cyprian's Trust."

At length Blanche fell into a sound slumber, from which she awoke, late in the afternoon, to find Gemma by her bedside.

"What is the matter? What has happened to you?" she exclaimed, starting up, and throwing her arms round Gemma, whose beautiful face was radiant with joy.

"Oh, Blanche! he's coming home! Ruthven is coming home! He is in London. He left his last two letters to be posted after he sailed, that I might not be in misery and suspense, and now he is in London, quite safe, quite well—and he is coming. Look, see, read his letter for yourself. Oh, Blanche, Blanche!"

A week afterwards, and again late at night, Mr. Vaughan and Miss Tredethlyn held council

in the library of the new house at Kilferran. But this time they were not alone. Colonel Ramsay was with them, and engaged in studying a rude drawing on a square of parchment, marked here and there with figures.

"It is difficult to reconstruct the Abbey from this old plan," said the Colonel. "We can but guess where the Prior's parloir stood, follow the indications from thence, and if we are wrong, assign some other situation to it, and begin again. The note is less intelligible than the plan :

"'First to right, close by fourth, reckoned from right wing.'

"We can make nothing of this to-night, Mr. Vaughan, at all events. To-morrow we will minutely inspect the ruins, if Miss Tredethlyn will undertake to keep Gemma engaged elsewhere—for I find she is to be kept in ignorance, though *why* I cannot understand."

"You must obey without understanding," said Blanche. "That ought not to be difficult to a soldier."

"I obey then. No one will think prowlers about your famous ruin in any way remarkable, and we cannot observe secrecy too abso-

lute. If indeed this treasure is found, the mere rumour of such a thing would bring all the country flocking in here, and cause you endless annoyance. If it be not found, and any rumour get abroad that such a search has been made, we should be laughed at, or perhaps shunned as something in the sorcerer or witch line."

"But," objected Mr. Vaughan, "suppose we discover the meaning of the enigmatical plan and note, still we must have assistance. The treasure is doubtless buried, and must be dug for."

"Certainly. But I can dig for it with your aid. What two men hid unassisted, two men unassisted can surely find. The chief point is to read the riddle of the plan. 'First to right,' what does that allude to? Rooms, passages, doors, wall,—it may be any of these, and none now exist."

"None," said Mr. Vaughan; "nothing now remains but the outer walls, with a few abutments, and some fragments of masonry adhering inside here and there, except, as you must have seen in passing the ruin, the external cloister which adjoins the entrance, with its short, thick, almost imperishable pillars."

"Pillars!" repeated Colonel Ramsay quickly—"there is a clue. Now we get number, and

that is less difficult than the measurement. 'Close by fourth.' Fourth of what? It may be windows or cells, or it may be columns; if not those which remain, we shall be able to calculate the whereabouts of the others by the spaces. I think we are getting at the truth, Mr. Vaughan, but we can test it no farther to-night."

When Blanche returned from the long drive to which she had condemned herself and Gemma—an act in which that young lady discerned the first want of consideration of which her friend had ever been guilty—she repaired at once to the ruin, and there she found Mr. Vaughan and Colonel Ramsay. They were standing in the centre of the open space facing the cloister, and Blanche placed herself by Colonel Ramsay's side.

"We have made a minute investigation," he said, "and have succeeded pretty well in reconstructing at least the outline of the Abbey; and we believe that we have discovered the interpretation of two of the clauses in the note. 'First to the right' we take to apply to the flags in the cloister; 'Close to fourth' we take to apply to the columns. Under the heaps of earth and grass on the opposite side, there

are doubtless flags corresponding with those which remain on this side. If we can but establish the point of departure, the rest is a matter of comparative measurement, by the number and space of the existing columns. But the last clause puzzles us completely, and throws out all our calculations. 'Reckoned from right wing.' There is no trace of a wing to the Abbey." While he was speaking, Blanche had scanned the skeleton walls from end to end, following the indications he gave. She remained silent when he paused, gazing intently in the direction of a jagged piece of masonry which jutted out from the main wall. Just above this, a small tablet, bearing a design in relief, much broken and hardly discernible, intruded upon the monotony of decay.

"Stay," she said, pointing to the tablet; "what if the reference to a wing were not made to the building? Gemma and I have made out the design on the broken tablet there to be the winged lion of St. Mark. See, one wing is still plainly to be traced. Do you think this can be the 'wing' from which the space is to be measured?"

Colonel Rainsay followed her words with close attention, and answered :

"You are right—there is no doubt you are right. You have solved the enigma, Miss Tredethlyn. Counting four columns from the right wing of the lion—these can only be the pillars still standing—we are actually treading upon the spot." He struck the time-worn granite flag with his heel. "Beneath this stone, if the Treasure be undisturbed, it lies. I think the Queen's Token must be a charm, and its virtue potent for all time. Unless the Treasure lies very deep—and that is not likely, for the hidiers of it had no notion that it was to be long concealed, and for their purposes a foot would have sufficed as well as a fathom—Miss Tredethlyn shall see her mysterious inheritance to-night."

Blanche smiled, a strange, absent smile, and, leaving the two gentlemen to concert their plans, preceded them to the house.

In the stillness of the night, when all was quiet, and she was the only watcher within the walls, Miss Tredethlyn stood by the window of her room, and looked for the feeble glimmer of the light that was flitting about the ruin. Occasionally the sound of metal ringing upon stone reached her strained ear. Many fancies crowded upon her, solemn thoughts filled her

mind. There were minutes, while she kept her watch, in which the whole scene seemed unreal, and she asked herself if this too were not a dream.

But the light ceased to glimmer, and her quick ear caught footfalls, which came nearer, but with frequent pauses, as though the feet were those of men who carried a heavy burthen. They passed round the angle of the house, and then Blanche crossed the room swiftly to the door, and stood beside it for a few moments with clasped hands and beating heart.

"Are you there?" asked Colonel Ramsay, from the outer side.

"Yes."

"Come to the library. We have brought you the Treasure. We have found Cyprian's Trust."

Yes—they had found it. The silent, stealthy earth had given up her secret to the hands so strangely guided to that lonely hiding-place. The gold and the gems destined by chivalrous loyalty and love for the Queen over whom an awful doom hung, even while the plotters were contriving her rescue, lay all uninjured before the eyes of these modern people, to whom Mary's memory was an ancient tradition. The

bones of the soldier, who had lived and died for her, were fathoms deep beneath the sea; the dust of the monk who had loved her, not more wisely, and no less well, mingled with the earth in which the Treasure had lain. The Token that had lured Louis de Valmont to the depths of the sea, rested on a girl's living breast, as bright and precious as when it did its errand of death. The Token that the monk had offered to the shrine of his penitence and his prayer—the twin heart of ruby and pearl—lay uppermost beneath the lid of the strong iron coffer. Over the stone covering, that had hidden all this wealth for ages, the feet of many generations had passed; beggars had crouched on it, shivering even in the sunshine, and idlers had loitered there in the tracks of the sandalled monks of old.

"I do not yet understand why Gemma was not told sooner," said Colonel Ramsay, when the delighted, bewildered girl had heard the story, and seen the Treasure; "for if one portion of it be more wonderful than another, it is the presence of the last of the De Valmonts under your roof at the time of the discovery; it is the clearing up of the family mystery."

"I concealed this from you, dearest Gemma," said Miss Tredethlyn, speaking with grave and impressive dignity, "until the Treasure was actually in our hands, because I would not have had you disappointed, if we had never found it. For it is yours; this is the inheritance which should have come to your father's ancestors, to him, and to you. Think how thankful I am that it has been given back to you, in some measure, by my instrumentality."

"Blanche! what do you mean? Stay, Miss Tredethlyn," interposed Colonel Ramsay; "you must not talk so wildly. Gemma has no possible claim, even if she, or I, could be induced to recognise any. You forget that the Comte de Valmont bequeathed this Treasure to the possessor of Kilferran. This, if any serious discussion of the matter could be possible——"

"The most serious moment in my life, Colonel Ramsay," said Blanche, "and the happiest, is this; for, if Gemma refuses to take her inheritance, I, as the possessor of Kilferran, bestow upon my sister, Cyprian's Trust."

Not of early death, with all its poetic allure-
ment, had the phantom music of Cyprian's bells

whispered to Blanche Tredethlyn, but of a long life, useful, calm, and happy. A solitary life, according to the world's notions—but the world and she had little in common—a life without close ties, but rich in the love and companionship of the poor, and the esteem of her “own people.”

The ruined Abbey of Kilferran is a ruin still ; but in the nearest city there is a church, “under the invocation of St. Dominic,” which the people owe to Miss Tredethlyn. Strangers who visit it are told that the stones under the altar were brought from Kilferran Abbey, and that no chimes so musical as the chimes of St. Dominic have rung out from any belfry in all the South since Cyprian's bells were carried away and lost. A small tablet on the wall of the church records that Mr. Vaughan was the first to be laid at rest in the newly-consecrated ground.

In an ancient church in Paris a richly-sculptured tomb, bearing the name and the arms of De Valmont, remains to this day. It is placed in a small chapel in one of the aisles, and it has, by some strange chance, escaped the shock and the desecration of successive revolutions. Between the tomb and the altar, there hangs upon the marble wall a

reliquary of quaint design, whose contents are of unknown origin, but very famous for their value and rarity. They are two heart-shaped jewels, each a great balas-ruby, laid with one pearl of price. The abiding-place of the Queen's Token has been well chosen, for in that chapel, under the roof of a stately church to which a multitude of historic memories belong, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, in the days of her innocent girlhood, but right royal state, was wont to kneel by the side of her "gentil DAUPHIN."

THE END

Extract from Mr. Sidney Dickinson's letter to the *Boston Journal*, descriptive of a trip over the Canadian Pacific Railway from Vancouver, B.C., to Montreal.

The impression that is made upon the traveller by a journey over this road is, at first, one of stupefaction, of confusion, out of which emerge slowly the most evident details. If one can find any fault with the trip, it must be upon the score of its excess of wonders. There is enough of scenery and grandeur along the line of the Canadian Pacific to make a dozen roads remarkable; after it is seen, the experiences of other journeys are quite forgotten. The road is attracting large numbers of tourists, and will attract more as its fame becomes more widely known; it is, undoubtedly, the most remarkable of all the products of this present age of iron. I have crossed the continent three times and should have some criterion for the judgment, and may say that whether we look to Ontario and Manitoba for richness of soil and peaceful and prosperous homes of men; to Lake Superior for ruggedness of shore, beauty of expanse of water, or wealth of mine and quarry; to Assiniboia and Alberta for impressive stretch of prairie and wild life of man, bird and beast, or to the Rocky, Selkirk and Cascade Mountains for sublimity and awfulness of precipice, peak and crag—we shall find them all as they nowhere else exist, even in America, the land of all lands for natural resources and wonders. No more delightful trip can be imagined than that by the Canadian Pacific Railway during the months of summer. For ourselves, until near Montreal, we found neither heat nor dust, and arrived at our journey's end with little feeling of fatigue. One point is especially worthy of remark—indeed, two, but one above all the rest. That is, the superior methods of provisioning the line, a thing in marked contrast to some roads which I could mention, where travellers are sure to be fed irregularly and wretchedly at the eating houses by the way, and, in consequence of delays, often are unable to secure any provision at all for eight or ten hours. The Canadian Pacific runs dining cars over all its line, except through the mountains, and there well managed hotels furnish a most excellent meal and at a moderate cost. In the dining cars (which are put on in relays at certain fixed points) meals are served exactly on time from day to day, and even in the wildest regions the passenger may be sure of dining, supping or breakfasting as well and cheaply as at any first-class hotel. The second point upon which comment is permissible is the invariable courtesy of all the railway's servants; I myself am much indebted to engineers, conductors and division officials for facilities in seeing and learning about the country over which we travelled. Wonderful in its construction, the road is equally admirable for the spirit and carefulness with which it is run.

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